Approaches to the Typology of Word Classes

Empirical Approaches to Language Typology

23

Editors

Georg Bossong
Bernard Comrie

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edited by

Petra M. Vogel
Bernard Comrie

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Contents

Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABS	absolutive
ACC	accusative
ACT	actor
A(DJ)	adjective
ADV	adverb
ADVERS	adversative
ADVL	adverbial, adverbialiser
AGT	agent
AL	alienable
ALL	allative
ART	article
ASSERT	assertative
ATTR	attributive
BEN	benefactive
CAUS	causative
CISLOC(AT)	cislocative
CL(ASS)	classifier
COINC	coincident
COLL	collective
COM	comitative
COMP	comparative
CONJ	conjunction
CONTIN	continuative
CONTR(AST)	contrastive
COP	copula, copular
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
DIR.OBJ	direct object
DIM	diminutive
DISTR(IBUT)	distributive
DU	dual
DUPL(IC)	duplicative
DUR	durative
EMPH	emphatic
EP	epenthetic
ERG	ergative
ESS	essive
EVENT	eventuative
EXCL	exclusive
FACILIT	facilitative
FACT	factual
F(EM)	feminine
FOC	focus
FUT	future
G(EN)	genitive
HAB	habitual
H.O	higher object
HUM	human
IMP(ERF)	imperfective
IN	inalienable
INCH(OAT)	inchoative
INCL	inclusive
INDEF	indefinite
INDIC	indicative
INF(IN)	infinitive
INFL	inflection
INTENS	intensive
IRR(EAL)	irrealis
LINK	linker
LOC	locative

M(ASC)/(EAS)	masculine; measure
MOM	momentaneous
N	noun
NEG	negative
NEUT	neuter
NOM	nominative
NOM(INALIS)	nominaliser
NP	nominal phrase
NUM	numeral
NUMT	numerative
O(BJ)	object
OPT	optative
P	particle
PART	partitive
PARTIC	participle
PASS	passive
PAST	past
PAT	patient
PERF	perfect(ive)
PERS	person, personal
PHENOM	phenomenological
PL	plural
POL	polarity
POSS	possessive
POSSD	possessed
POSSR	possessor
PP	past perfective
PRED	predication/predicator
PREF	prefix
PREP	preposition
PRES	present
PREV	preverbial
PROGR	progressive
PRON	pronoun
PROX	proximate
PRST	presentative
PUNCT	punctual
QUOT	quotative
REAL	realis
REC	reciprocal
REDUP	reduplication
REF	referentialiser
REFL	reflexive
REL	relativiser, relative
RR	reflexive-reciprocal
SBJNCT	subjunctive
SG	singular
SP	specific
STAT	stative
S(UBJ)	subject
SUBST	substantive
SUF	suffix
SUPERL	superlative
TAM	tense/aspect/mood
TOP	topic
TR	transitive
TRANSLOC	translocative
UNCERT	uncertainty
USP	unspecific
V	verb
VP	verbal phrase

Preface

The history of word class research is characterised by two extreme positions. Up to the 19th century it was believed that word classes were invariably of the Latin or Greek type and universal. In contrast to that, in the 20th century the view prevailed that every language had its own specific and unique word class system. In the last decades, however, it has become apparent that despite the large number of word classes and word-class systems there are typological restrictions with regard to the conceptualisation of semantic features and morphosyntactic structures.

This book approaches word classes and their categorial manifestations from the perspective of typology and language universals research. The authors in this volume discuss word class categorisation in general (Part I) as well as word classes and word class systems of individual languages (Part II) from a typological-universal viewpoint and from diachronic and cross-linguistic perspectives.

Part I, General studies, contains articles by *Jan Anward* on part-of-speech differentiation and flexibility, *D.N.S. Bhat* on sentential functions and lexicalisation, *William Croft* on parts of speech as language universals, *Nicholas Evans* on kinship verbs, *David Gil* on syntactic categories and eurocentricity, *Jan Rijkhoff* on the question when a language can have adjectives, *Petra M. Vogel* on grammaticalisation and parts of speech and *Anna Wierzbicka* on lexical prototypes as a basis for identification of parts of speech.

Jan Anward develops a dynamic model of part-of-speech differentiation, where the "deep" organising factors of part-of-speech systems are motivated not by properties internal to such systems, but are factors which drive language development in general: maximisation of meaning, and minimisation of effort. Part-of-speech systems are what "happen" as a result of processes of successive syntagmatic and paradigmatic expansion, in which optimal use is made of lexical resources, through recycling of items in several functions. But new functions of old items must be identifiable. This means that each language must strike a balance between flexibility (recycling) and contrast (identification). The model draws its empirical evidence mainly from Swedish, but also from a small pilot sample of nine additional languages.

D.N.S. Bhat argues that word classes represent lexicalisations of different sentential functions. The function of modifying the head noun in a noun phrase, for example, gets lexicalised into a word class of adjectives, whereas that of referring to persons, objects or entities gets lexicalised into a word class of nouns. The characteristics that these word classes manifest are derivable from the sentential functions for which they have been lexicalised, and further, the word classes manifest these char-

acteristics maximally only when they are used in their respective sentential functions. Languages which fail to have one or the other of these word classes do not make use of the corresponding sentential functions, as they use alternative sentence strategies for which those sentential functions are not needed.

In the paper by *William Croft* it is maintained that the major parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective) are not categories of particular languages, but are language universals. Linguists have used distribution of words in constructions to justify part-of-speech membership. But no sound theoretical basis has been provided to justify choice of tests for membership, leading to disagreement and confusion. In fact, the variation in the occurrence of constructions and in the distribution patterns of words across languages and within languages demonstrates that lexical classes are language-specific and construction-specific. A radical construction grammar model is proposed to represent this state of affairs. The universals of parts of speech are manifested in conceptual space, with principles such as typological markedness defining prototypes in the formal expression of conceptual categories found in conceptual space.

Nicholas Evans starts from the assumption that kinship relations are expressed by verbs in a number of head-marking languages of North America and northern Australia. Kinship verbs are interesting for word class studies because it is their relational (two-place) semantic structure, rather than the more familiar ontological contrast between "things" and "actions", which motivates their lexicalisation as verbs. This in turn skews the likelihood with which particular inflectional categories are grammaticalised, as compared to "normal verbs". After surveying some typical kinship verb systems, he looks at how "verby" kinship verbs are, and then examines a number of factors responsible for splits between nominal and verbal encoding, including address vs. reference, actual vs. classificatory kin, kin type, and person combinations between the two arguments. Overall, kinship verbs emphasise the need to pay greater attention to interpersonal pragmatics as a determinant of word class membership.

David Gil proposes a theory of syntactic categories accounting for both the differences and the similarities that may be observed to obtain between languages. The theory takes as its starting point the autonomy of syntax and the existence of distinct morphological, syntactic and semantic levels of representation: syntactic categories are defined solely in terms of syntactic properties, such as distributional privileges, and participation in syntactic relations such as binding, government and agreement. In the spirit of categorial grammar, the theory posits a single initial category and two category formation rules with which other categories can be derived: the familiar "slash" rule, plus a rule derived from x-bar theory. Constraints on syntactic category inventories distinguish between inventories that are possible and others that are im-

possible. Finally, the traditional parts of speech such as noun, adjective and verb are defined as syntactic categories which are prototypically associated with other, semantic categories.

Jan Rijkhoff rightly maintains that not every language has a distinct class of adjectives. In his article he argues that the occurrence of adjectives as a major, distinct word class depends on a semantic (lexical) property of the nouns. A language can only have adjectives if the nouns in that language are lexically specified for the feature [+Shape], which means that the properties that are designated by these nouns are characterised as having a spatial boundary. The theory focuses on Hmong Njua but also draws evidence from other languages.

Petra M. Vogel presents a model for ungrammaticalised, grammaticalised, and degrammaticalised parts of speech systems exemplified by Tongan, German, and English, respectively. This model is based on the assumptions made in Broschart 1997 that the main difference between parts of speech systems in languages like Tongan and German is due to the distribution of the features [+/–pred] (predicability) and [+/–ref] (reference in discourse) in lexicon and syntax. On the one hand she argues that the "fixed" presence or absence of the feature [+pred] with regard to a lexeme makes for a grammaticalised (German) or ungrammaticalised parts of speech system (Tongan). On the other hand, the acquisition or loss of the feature [+pred] in the parts of speech system of a language is called a grammaticalisation or degrammaticalisation process, respectively. The latter process is exemplified by the case of English.

Anna Wierzbicka proposes that it is generally agreed in modern linguistics (and rightly so) that it makes sense to establish word-classes for any language on the basis of language-specific, formal (morphosyntactic) criteria. It is also widely agreed that some word-classes established in this way in different languages "match" to some extent, and that, in particular, the distinction berween "nouns" and "verbs" is universal or near universal. But if word-classes are set up on language-internal formal grounds, how can they be matched across languages? She argues that this can be done on the basis of empirically established linguistic universals, that is, concepts which can be found in an identifiable form in all languages, and which can also be accepted as intuitively intelligible (non-technical) conceptual primitives. For example, "nouns" can be matched via the universal lexical prototypes PEOPLE and THINGS, "verbs"—via DO and HAPPEN, and "adjectives"—via BIG and SMALL. She shows how the set of lexico-grammatical universals, which has been established within the "NSM" ("Natural Semantic Metalanguage") linguistic theory, can be used as a framework for investigating linguistic typology and universal grammar.

Part II, Language-specific studies, contains articles by *Werner Abraham* on German modal particles, *Jürgen Broschart* on Tongan preverbials, *Monika Budde* on

German pronouns, *Marianne Mithun* on the morphosyntax of nouns and verbs in Iroquoian, *Robin Sackmann* on numeratives in Mandarin Chinese and *Arfinn Muruvik Vonen* on Polynesian multifunctionality.

Werner Abraham deals with what has been called an uncategorisable class of lexicals, the *modal particles* (*MPs*). They occur characteristically, and to all appearances only, in the continental West Germanic languages. The data presented here are limited to German. The meaning of MPs is typically vague to indiscriminable, but their illocutionary force and distributional constraints are nevertheless considerable and sharply delineated. The main goal of the paper is to delineate more sharply this "non-category" in distributional terms and, above all, explain the source of its specific illocutionary force and distributional behaviour.

The paper by *Jürgen Broschart* discusses a special class of function words in Tongan grammar which are called "preverbials". The grammatical charateristics of this class are contrasted with the behaviour of semantically similar items in order to determine the typological status of this class relative to established means for the expression of the notions of aspectuality, temporality, modality, and manner of action. He addresses synchronic questions of syntactic function as well as historical developments leading from superordinate predicates to the essentially adverbial category in question.

Monika Budde argues that identifying the lexical words of a particular language is one of the major tasks of the language's grammar. Such an identification is presupposed in both the identification of the language's word classes and the comparison of classifications of different languages' lexical items. In practice, the main problem is to justify which entities should qualify as words. Using Integrational Linguistics and especially Hans-Heinrich Lieb's explication of "word paradigm", the paper develops a general method for justifying particular lexical words. First, the paradigms and the lexical meanings of German possessive pronouns are determined in a systematic way. Then, the method used in this sample analysis is applied to other pronouns of German. Finally, the results are generalised by focusing on those aspects of the argumentation that are independent of the sample word class and the sample language.

Marianne Mithun takes as a starting-point that certain typologies of lexical categories have pointed to the Iroquoian languages as counterexamples to the universality of the noun-verb distinction. In fact the distinction is particularly robust in these languages. The languages do show, however, that morphological, syntactic, and semantic criteria do not always yield the same classifications of lexical items. Iroquoian verbs, nouns, and particles show strikingly different morphological structures. Morphological nouns function syntactically as nominals, identifying arguments of clauses. They also show the semantic characteristics expected of nouns,

denoting objects and persons. Morphological verbs typically function syntactically as predicates. Semantically they denote events and states. But both particles and verbs are also used syntactically and semantically as nominals. Once their morphological, syntactic, and semantic properties are distinguished, their classification is straightforward.

Robin Sackmann attempts to determine the syntactic properties of numeratives (classifiers and measures) in Mandarin Chinese, understood as a distinct word class. Using Hans-Heinrich Lieb's theory of Integrational Linguistics as a theoretical background, the essay focuses on three topics: the syntactic structure of numerative expressions, the position that numeratives and their subclasses occupy in the part-of-speech system of Mandarin Chinese, and the syntactic basis of Chinese 'noun classification' conceived as a relationship between classifiers and certain sets of substantives, so-called 'noun classes'. A number of key concepts needed for describing any numeral classifier language are formally defined, in particular, a concept of numeral classifier language itself.

Arnfinn Muruvik Vonen starts from the assumption that there is a long-standing debate concerning the distinction between nouns and verbs in Polynesian languages. He points out that some of the apparent disagreements in this debate, and possibly in similar debates concerning other language groups such as Wakashan, Salishan and signed languages, may stem from differences in the ambitions of linguistic description rather than from real differences in understanding the data. A distinction is made between two motivations for rejecting a noun-verb distinction on the lexical level in Polynesian and adopting the notion of multifunctional lexical items: a principled motivation and a methodological motivation. In the latter case, the rejection of the distinction may be due to low descriptive ambitions.

Osnabrück/Leipzig, September 1999 Petra M. Vogel and Bernard Comrie