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I English philology faculty

Course paper

The theme: Subject matter of
Structural typology.

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Subject matter of Structural typology

Plan:

I. Introduction.

II. Main part.

1. The Structural typology as the major branch of Linguistic typology.

2. Types of the structural typology.

3. The structural typology of verbs.

III. Conclusion.

The Structural typology is the major branch of Linguistic typology and aims to identify structural language types. The Structural typology has 4 branches:

- a) linguistic universals;
- b) typological classification;
- c) etalon language;
- d) typological theory.

Some scholars consider Structural typology an independent branch of General Linguistics. It is connected with Comparative Linguistics and Theory of Linguistic Methods. The ultimate goal of Structural typology is identifying universal features of languages. Major scholars who contributed to the development of structural typology are B. Uspenskiy, V.P. Nedyalkov, Ch. Hockette, Yu.Rojdestvenskiy.¹

Major parameters of Structural typology are:

- Indifference to system identity;
- Indifference to genetic identity;
- Open list of compared languages/quantitative

¹ M.Fayzullaeva "The Guidebook on Typology"

non-limitation

- Areal non-limitation;
- Possibility of deep and surface identity.
- Indifference to etic -emic identity
- Mostly one level approach to comparison;
 - Relatively unlimited etalon language;
 - Complete typological operation in case of linguistic universal.

A. Linguistic Universale are bound to unification of language facts, identifying common/similar features specific to systems of all or separate language groups.

The notion of Linguistic Universals appeared in 1961 at the Congress of Linguists in New York where J. Greenburg, J. Jenkins and I. Osgood proposed a Memorandum on Language/Linguistic Universals. They defined it as follows: "A Linguistic Universal is a certain feature specific to all languages of the world or the language perse."

The universals may be classified according to various principles. For example, according to the statistic principle there are unrestricted (absolute or full) universals opposed to restricted (relative, partial) universals (some

scholars prefer the term "tendency" instead of "universal"). According to language hierarchy there are phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic universals. Other types include deductive and inductive; synchronic and diachronic universals; universals of speech and universals of language.

For example, universals related to the levels of language hierarchy:

UNIVERSAL TYPE	UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON
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PHONETIC:	all languages have vowels and consonants..
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MORPHOLOGICAL:

a) in most languages words are structured into morphemes.

b) morphemes function as full and auxiliary elements.

LEXICAL:

a) in all languages vocabulary is a system of semantic fields.

b) in all languages there is polysemy, synonymy,

antonymy.

SYNTACTIC: in all languages there is a distribution of SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT (SVO) in the sentence.

Examples of full universals:

"If a language has discreet morphemes, there are either pre-fixation or suffixation or both of them". "If a language is exclusively suffixational, it is a language with post-fixes. If a language is exclusively prefixational, it is a language with prefixes ",

There are different ways of articulating and describing linguistic universals: descriptive and formal (with the help of special symbols).

A *Etalon language* is an object language for Linguistic typology and it is also a means or *system of tools to compare languages*. It is usually identified deductively. The notion of etalon language was introduced by Boris Uspenskiy.²

Some scholars prefer the term meta language which is to a certain extent synonymous to etalon

² M.Fayzullaeva "The Guidebook on Typology"

language. It is the second major function of the etalon language to serve an instrument of comparison. This instrument may be represented as follows:

- any natural language (usually one's native tongue)
- a linguistic category, for example gender, voice, person, sex, etc.
- a postulate of General Linguistics, for example, polysemy, semantic field, etc.

At mediaeval times Latin was usually used to compare other languages (Grammar of Port Royal) but because Latin grammatical structure is rather complicated now it is often suggested to take an amorphous language as a meta language or turn either to a linguistic category or a postulate.

Below are some more examples of etalon languages:

- a) specially created artificial language;
- b) an existing language with well-developed system;
- c) certain sign system;

- d) certain linguistic method;
- e) phonetic, morphological, syntactic or other models;
- f) intermediary language;
- g) Language of translation, etc.

For applied purposes etalon language is classified into minimal and maximal.

C *Typological classification* is ..."opposed to genetic/genealogical classification and is bound to classifying languages according to their taxonomic/systemic features and defining structural types of languages". (V' Solntzev)²⁹.

Morphological or Typological classification deals with the classification of languages according to their structural features or types IN language instead of the genealogical origin.

1. Introduction: The grammar is a set of structural generalizations

What one needs to know about verbs is whether they have one, two, three or even more arguments: intransitive laugh has one argument, transitive see has

two arguments, and ditransitive give has three arguments. If one is concerned with a particular language, one also needs to know how these arguments are realized. Turning from English to Turkish, to Georgian or to one of the indigenous languages of America, one finds quite different argument linking types, i.e. ways in which the arguments of a verb are realized. This paper tries to summarize some recent work on both argument structure and argument realization.

The first question is how certain we are that every language has verbs. The majority of linguists is convinced that the existence of two well-distinguished lexical categories, namely verbs and nouns, belongs to the most certain universals of human language. Some linguists, however, dispute such a universal claim. They present two kinds of counter-evidence: (i) Some languages do not exhibit clear differences between morphological means that apply to verbs and those that apply to nouns (Sasse 1992 on Cayuga, an Iroquoian language). (ii) Other languages exhibit large sets of lexical roots that function as verbs when combined with an aspect or tense marker, but function as nouns when

combined with a definite article (Broschart 1995 on Tongan, an Oceanic language). See also the survey of such reservations in Sasse (1993). A closer inspection of these 'counter-examples', however, shows that these languages do not represent exceptions to the above-mentioned universal. Their grammar shows clear asymmetries between verbs and nouns, in the morphological behavior, the incorporation of nouns into verbs, and the forming of new nominal items derived from verbs.³

There is of course some semantic background for the distinction of verbs and nouns.

Prototypically, verbs (such as sleep, stay, hit, give) denote temporally changing entities (events or states) in which one or more objects are participating, while nouns (such as man, house, bottle, salt) denote temporally constant entities (objects determined merely spatially) which can participate in events or states. Usually, a complex scene where a man is sleeping is decomposed into the temporal predicate SLEEP (with an argument slot) and some instance of the nontemporal

³ Wunderlich 1996

predicate MAN (an argument that fills the slot); SLEEP is associated grammatically with a verb and MAN with a noun, rather than the other way around. Nearly every language encodes 'a man

N

sleeps

V

' rather than 'a sleep

N

occurs-to-man

V

However, the classification into verbs and nouns is not purely semantic-driven. Given the rich conceptual variation into punctual vs. extended events, on-going activities vs. achievements, permanent vs. temporally restricted states, masses vs. individual objects, concrete vs. abstract activities/objects one must wonder why there are just two major lexical classes rather than, say, eight or ten. Moreover, a closer inspection of the vocabulary of a language shows that some items seem to be wrongly classified: nouns such as journey, war, and game denote events rather than obj

ects, while verbs such as resemble , exist , be above or be tall do not denote events. One point to be made here is that some languages (such as English) in addition to verbs and nouns also have prepositions (above P) and adjectives (tall A), so that a more detailed classification arises. Other languages, such as Chinese, for instance, do not make such a clear addition to the grammar.

More important is another point: lexical categories evolve in a set of lexical items from generalization towards certain structural patterns, a fact that can be summarized by a distinctive grammatical feature by which the lexicon is partitioned into two classes, a designated one (such as verbs), and the remaining (unmarked or default) class (called nouns). Such a classification is more robust and more economical than a purely semantic. Towards a structural typology of verb classes³ classification, however, it leaves certain 'less motivated' assignments, which in the history of a language may survive as relics. A child that starts out to learn the words of a language seems to need only a short time to detect the verb class vs. the noun class, and as soon as this happens, the child produces

overgeneralizations, i.e., classifies not always in accordance with the language to be learned. If one has acquired the basic classification of the vocabulary, there is no further need to motivate it semantically. Only for a new item the question arises to which class it belongs, which is mostly decided on the basis of semantic (or even phonological) similarity to another already existing group of items – if a semantically similar word is classified as a verb, the new item will also be assigned to verbs.

Furthermore, semantic factors continue in playing a contextual role when the particular meanings of items are in focus.

Within the class of verbs, various kinds of semantic subclassification come into mind: verbs with animate or inanimate arguments, verbs of movement, position or placement, verbs of manipulation, experience, perception, communication, and so on. Nearly none of these possible semantic factors is decisive for the further grammatical subclassification of verbs, except animacy in some languages. For instance, the Algonquian languages from North America make a formal distinction between stems with animate and those

with inanimate objects (e.g. *waapam* 'see sth. animate' vs. *waapaht* 'see sth. inanimate' in Plains Cree).

The most robust sub-classification of verbs concerns the number of arguments: intransitive verbs have one, transitive verbs have two, and ditransitive verbs have three nominal arguments. (Verbs with zero valency are extremely rare – one possible semantic class of this kind are weather verbs, such as Latin *pluit* 'it rains', however, note that English uses here an expletive pronoun, which masks the verb to be intransitive.) Besides that, verbs are subclassified of whether they take a clausal complement (verbs of mental attitudes), which under some conditions can also be reduced to an infinitive or a similar non-finite verb form (*he hopes to win* vs. *he hopes that he will win*). Furthermore, at least some languages have a subclass of verbs that take a locational argument, e.g., a prepositional phrase (*he sits on the bank* , *he puts the cans on the bank*). Sometimes one also finds a class of verbs that take prepositional objects in which the preposition is lexically fixed (without contributing a particular meaning): *an jdn denken* 'think at someone',

auf etw. hoffen 'hope for sth.', an etw. glauben 'believe in sth.' If two nominal arguments occur with a verb, the meaning of the verb sometimes requires one argument to be animate and the other to be inanimate (read, sew, enter), however, more than often this is not the case. The second argument of see, for instance, can be inanimate or animate; in the latter case, the two arguments can in principle be exchanged, thereby shifting the intended reading (the man saw the lion and the lion saw the man mean different things). It is even possible that a verb has three arguments that are similar in their nature, consider send or introduce where any ordering of the three nominal arguments is possible (the neighbor sent/introduced the woman to a specialist; a specialist sent/introduced the neighbor to the woman; etc.).

If the number of arguments counts, there must be some way to make the arguments recognizable in their specific role: which nominal functions as which argument. In English, this decision is made by position: usually the 'subject' precedes the verb, and the 'object' follows it. Other languages primarily use morphological

case on nominals, or they use pronominal affixes or clitics attached to the verb. The particular device that maps argument roles onto morphosyntactic patterns is called 'argument linking'. Several types of argument linking are known. Each argument linking type represents an economic way of avoiding ambiguities with verbs having more than one nominal argument. As we will see, each of these devices simultaneously enforces a certain sub-classification of verbs according to structural parameters.

In any case, the classification of verbs seems to depend more on the possible realization patterns for their arguments than on inherent semantic features. Sometimes, however, it is possible to use a formal device to mark an exceptional semantic class of verbs. For instance, German has a small class of intransitive experiencer verbs with accusative marking, which is unusual for intransitives: *mich friert* 'I am cold', *mich fröstelt* 'I am shivering with cold'. Among the various argument linking types one type is found that seems to be rather uneconomical: the portmanteau-type. A portmanteau affix simultaneously specifies more than one

type of information. For instance, Latin passive is realized by a set of suffixes that inform us about both passive and person-number (ama-mini 'you (pl) are loved', with -mini '2pl. PASS'). Another type of portmanteau affix simultaneously specifies more than one argument. Hungarian uses the single suffix -lak/-lek to express the combination I→you similarly, Ayacucho Quechua uses the suffix -yki to express this combination, see (1a,b).

(1) I →you portmanteau suffixes in Hungarian and in Quechua

a. szeret-lek

'I love you (sg/pl).'

b. riku-yki

'I see you.'

To express the combination I →you is very special because here the speaker 'acts upon' the addressee in the propositional content similar to the speech act itself, so it does not wonder that a portmanteau morpheme adapted to this special task is found in several languages. However, if all possible combinations of subject values and object values are

expressed by portmanteaux, the number of these affixes increases, and it is not possible for the learner to make any separate generalizations about subjects and objects. That portmanteau affixes in general are uneconomic can be seen from a simple calculation. With three persons (1st, 2nd, and 3rd person) and two numbers (singular and plural) one would need at most 6 affixes for the subject and 6 affixes for the object (together 12 affixes); however, there are 28 possible combinations (if all reflexive settings such as I/we→I/we and you→you are excluded). The portmanteau linking type, therefore, is strongly disfavored.

However, Kiowa, a Tanoan-Kiowa language spoken in west central Oklahoma, obviously exhibits this type, as illustrated by the examples in (2). Here, the prefixes simultaneously specify person and number of the two arguments of a transitive verb (2a), and in addition, they specify the number (dual or plural) of a third argument (2b).

(2) Portmanteau prefixes in Kiowa: only one prefix is allowed. (Watkins 1984)

a. Transitive verbs: a single prefix encodes information about both arguments (góp 'hit').

I hit you/him you/he hit me you/he/they hit us
we/he/they hit you

The arrow is used to express subject → object information. Towards a structural typology of verb classes 5 b. Ditransitive verbs: a single prefix encodes information about all three arguments

(ç 'give', kut 'book')

you/he gave me

two books

I gave you/him

two books

you (pl) gave me/us/

him two books

they gave me/us/

him some books

The situation is not so bad from the perspective of the speaker (i.e., in terms of economy) because nearly all prefixes are ambiguous (e.g. , cover both 2nd person and 3sg), but this is certainly not welcomed from the

perspective of the hearer. Therefore, Kiowa is not a language that invites people to participate. Indeed, the population is small and isolated (according to the 1990 census, only about 1,000 middle-aged and older speakers out of a population of 6,000). Probably, the observed prefixes are the result of massive fusion (forced by the pressure towards 'one prefix only'), and the portmanteau type observed in this language is not a real candidate of typological variation.

In the following, I will disregard such extreme but unfelicitous cases and rather concentrate on the structural conditions that are frequent. I will start with prototypical transitive verbs in section 2 because these verbs belong to the core of a grammar. I will then turn to intransitive verbs, including their relationship to transitive ones, properties of these verbs determine what is known as active-inactive type. Further argument linking types, which all are based on transitive verbs, are considered.

Transitive verbs seem to be one of the most ingenious inventions of human language, because they denote a relation between two participants of an event,

and because this relation is structurally asymmetric. Therefore, transitive verbs are in the center of a grammar; if they were absent from the lexicon, a grammar would be much simpler than it actually is.

Typical (or canonical) transitive verbs are chase, hit, kill, eat, kiss, and many more .

Obviously they do not form a characteristic class by semantic similarities in a certain field of human activities (hunting-gathering, nourishing, social and sexual behavior), but rather reflect a very deep structural generalization (which must have been an important step in the evolution of human language). In addition, every language allows for the enrichment of the class of transitive verbs by less canonical items such as see, hear, meet, ask, obtain, surround , and furthermore, for the derivation of new transitive verbs such as enlarge and to open, although the languages widely differ in the details. So what is the common property of transitive verbs?

Canonical transitive verbs are two-place predicates with two clearly distinguished argument roles, which is illustrated with the verb eat .

We say that *apple* denotes a certain individual fruit, which is represented as $\lambda x \text{ APPLE}(x)$, where x counts as the referential argument of the noun. It is manipulated (specified and bound) by the functional categories on the noun, such as determiners and quantifiers (*the apple*, *every apple*). Similarly, one can say that *eat* denotes a certain individual event, which one would have to represent as $\lambda y \lambda x \lambda e \text{ EAT}(x,y)(e)$, where e counts as the referential argument of the verb. It is manipulated (specified and bound) by the functional categories on the verb.⁴

x (= the eater) is the higher argument, and y (= the eaten) is the lower argument.

The λ s abstract over these arguments, thus representing the argument roles or slots.

These λ -roles ($\lambda y, \lambda x$) must be saturated in the course of composition, i.e. the two arguments must be realized by some linguistic expressions.

For instance, we can first apply 'eat' on 'the apple', and then apply the result on 'John', which yields 'John eats the apple'.

⁴Dieter Wunderlich

- (4) a. (eat the apple): $\lambda y \lambda x \text{ EAT } (x,y)$
 (the.apple) = $\lambda x \text{ EAT } (x, \text{the.apple})$
- b. (John (eats the apple)): $\lambda x \text{ EAT } (x, \text{the.apple})$
 (John) = $\text{EAT } (\text{John}, \text{the.apple})$

An important observation is that transitive verbs are always asymmetric. It is easy to make a semantic distinction between the eater and the eaten, but to make a semantic distinction between the two persons who marry each other is not so easy. MARRY is a symmetric predicate (if John married Anne, then Anne also married John), nevertheless, the verb marry is in the same way grammatically asymmetric as eat: in 'John married Anne', 'John' realizes the higher argument, and 'Mary' the lower one. This is the cost for putting marry into the class of transitive verbs.

The source for the generalization yielding the concept of transitive verbs is of course semantic. In a prototypical transitive verb (such as eat rather than marry), the higher argument functions as agent or actor ('the participant which performs, effects, instigates, or controls the situation denoted by the predicate', Foley & Van Valin 1984:29), while the lower argument functions

as patient, or undergoer, or affected. Several theories have tried to postulate a semantic hierarchy of thematic or eventive roles, which is mapped onto a grammatical hierarchy (such as subject-object, nominative-accusative). Thematic hierarchies often include several possible roles such as agent, patient, theme, experiencer, beneficiary, recipient, goal, source, but it has controversially been discussed how these roles are demarcated and what their exact ordering is (Grimshaw 1990, Jackendoff 1990). There are two proposals that reduce the number of thematic roles to just two (in accordance with the fact that a transitive verb has two arguments): the two proto-roles in Dowty's (1991) account are determined by the relative weight of several semantic factors, while the two macro-roles (actor and undergoer) in the account of Foley & Van Valin (1984) reflect both semantic and grammatical factors. Eventive roles (Pustejovsky 1991, among others) account for the participation of arguments in the possible subevents, such as an ongoing activity and a change of state. A summary is given in (5).

(5) The asymmetry of transitive verbs hierarchy: the lower argument (nearer to the verb) the higher argument
 protoroles: protopatient protoagent
 macroroles: undergoer actor conceptual inferences: affected controller eventive roles: specifies the result specifies the ongoing activity aspect, tense, and mood. Since this article is concerned with the argument structure of verbs, which I believe to be essentially independent of the verb's capacity to denote events, the referential argument of verbs is disregarded.

Towards a structural typology of verb classes 7
 grammatical roles: object subject case (accusative system): accusative nominative case (ergative system): nominative ergative

features: +hr -hr

-lr +lr

As a *façon de parler*, it is often convenient to use the semantic notions of agent vs. patient, or the more structural notions of subject vs. object. However, one must be careful for avoiding misinterpretations: in 'a wall surrounds the garden', the higher argument, namely

'the wall', is certainly not an agent semantically, and in 'the bear was killed', 'the bear' is considered to be the (grammatical!) subject, although it certainly functions as patient. The most neutral way is to encode the asymmetry (i.e. the hierarchy of roles) by two simple relational features: +hr 'there is another role which is higher than this one' (for short: 'there is a higher role') characterizes the lower argument, while +lr 'there is a lower role' characterizes the higher argument.⁵

These features, representing 'abstract case', have the advantage that their positive value corresponds to the information of morphological case: accusative bears the feature +hr (thus marking the lower argument), and ergative bears the feature +lr (thus marking the higher argument). The subject of an intransitive verb is designated as -hr, -lr; therefore, neither accusative nor ergative are compatible with this argument. However, the nominative (bearing no feature specification) is compatible with an intransitive subject; it is indeed compatible with any argument. But in the morphology

⁵. Wunderlich 1997

usually the most specific option is chosen: if accusative is possible, then it should be chosen.

This specification of accusative and ergative conforms to the traditional way in which these notions are used cross-linguistically. If the agent (A) is realized like the subject of an intransitive verb (S), and the patient (P) is realized differently (by means of a morphological case, a postposition, or a pronominal affix), the marker that encodes P is called 'accusative'

(ACC). However, if P is realized like S, and A is realized differently, the marker that encodes

A is called 'ergative' (ERG), see (6). The respective other type of realization (regardless of whether it is specifically marked or simply unmarked, for instance, if the stem is used) is called 'nominative' (NOM).

(6) The definitions of 'accusative' (ACC) vs. 'ergative' (ERG)

ACC	NOM	NOM	ERG
intransitive	S	S	
transitive	P A	P A	

The accusative is illustrated with a German example (7), and the ergative with Basque (8).

Note that the auxiliary in Basque agrees with all the structural cases occurring with a verb; 'E' indicates agreement with ergative, and 'N' indicates agreement with nominative.

Conclusion

So, Structural typology is an independent branch of General Linguistics. It is connected with Comparative Linguistics and Theory of Linguistic Methods. The ultimate goal of Structural typology is identifying universal features of languages. Major scholars who contributed to the development of structural typology are B. Uspenskiy, V.P. Nedyalkov, Ch. Hockette, Yu.Rojdestvenskiy.

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