

(re-)expanding typology: intra-linguistic variation, discourse.

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In this talk, I propose two directions in which I think linguistic typology should expand: the incorporation of intra-linguistic variation and the inclusion of discourse functions for crosslinguistic comparison. I argue that broadening the horizons of linguistic typology in these directions would result in a more accurate picture of crosslinguistic diversity and that it can tighten the relationship between typology and other subfields of linguistics as well as other disciplines such as cognitive psychology and anthropology.

First, I propose that typological studies not impose a “one-language, one-value” policy for typological variables (as done, for example, in many *World Atlas of Language Structures* entries) and include intra-linguistic morphosyntactic variation in their analyses. I illustrate one method of taking such variation into account with an analysis of nominal predication in a sample of Indo-Iranian languages. Using bipartite network graphs, I show that the patterns by which two (or more) subdomains of nominal predication are expressed by identical grammatical means are much more varied than previously assumed. Further, I show that ignoring intra-linguistic variation results in a skewed picture of the syntactic diversity within the domain of nominal predication.

Second, I propose that linguistic typology (re-)expand to include discourse functions as typological features. While discourse functions were central to functional-typological work between the 1970s and the early 1990s, much of the recent typological work seems to downplay discourse as an area for comparison and analysis. I present two studies in which discourse functions play a major role. I show how discourse functions can be construed as comparative concepts for crosslinguistic comparison by surveying a set of studies focused on analyzing narratives in African languages. Then, I show how the concept of “discourse topic” is central to the function of two major constructions in Alsea, a language of the Oregon Coast.

(297 words)