

Title: Deconstructing Teleology:
The place of synchronic usage patterns among processes of diachronic development

Category: Oral

Theme session: Typological Universals and Diachrony

Views vary on the role of implicational hierarchies in shaping language. One is that hierarchies are primary, described by Corbett (2011): 'Since a hierarchy constrains what is a possible language, it is also a constraint on language change, because languages move from one possible state to another'. Another is the reverse, characterized in the theme session description: hierarchies simply 'capture the outputs of independent diachronic processes.' Here it is argued that explaining the typological patterns we find depends crucially on understanding the various kinds of interactions that can hold between hierarchies and processes of language change.

The point of departure is the most frequently-cited set of hierarchies, the animacy/topicality/referential hierarchies. They take forms like the following:

speaker > hearer > 3rd person pronouns > kinsmen > other humans > higher animals > lower animals > inanimates

(Additional features such as definiteness and count may also come into play.) Hierarchies from this set have been implicated in a number of areas of structure. One is differential number marking: if a language distinguishes number on forms at any point in the hierarchy, it will also differentiate number on all categories to the left (first noted in Smith-Stark 1974). Another is reference within the verb: if the referent of some form on the hierarchy is marked on the verb by pronominal or agreement affixes, so too will all forms to its left on the hierarchy (noted early in Moravcsik 1974). A third is case marking: if members of a category carry accusative case marking, so will all categories to its left; if members of a category carry ergative case marking, so will all categories to its right (Silverstein 1976). A fourth, of a slightly different type, involves hierarchical systems: if only one argument is identified by marking in the verb, the leftmost on the above scale will take precedence over all those to its right (with the caveat that in many systems, the order is 2nd persons > 1st) (Mithun 2012 and others).

Here it will be shown that these patterns display a variety of relationships between the hierarchies and diachrony, with examples from a range of families including Austronesian, Wakashan, Salishan, Chimariko, Yana, Pomoan, Siouan, Uto-Aztecan, and Iroquoian. In some cases, a need felt by speakers can drive the development of number distinctions over time. Evidence comes from language contact: bilinguals accustomed to number distinctions in one of their languages may create them in the other, through reanalysis of existing native forms. The forms themselves are drawn from a variety of sources, sources which determine the entry point for the distinction. In other cases, animacy/topicality/referential hierarchies play a more indirect role. They reflect recurring patterns of expression, which in turn serve as a foundation for the routinization of grammaticalization. Such developments can involve several different kinds of processes revolving around topicality, among them a propensity for passivization and the use of pronouns for given (topical) participants as opposed to full lexical expressions.

Corbett, Greville 2011. Implicational hierarchies. *Handbook of Language Typology*. Jae Jung Song, ed. Oxford.

Mithun, Marianne 2012. Core argument patterns and deep genetic relations. *Typology of Argument Structure and Grammatical Relations*. P. Suihkonen, B. Comrie, and V. Solovyev eds. *Studies in Language Companion Series*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 257-294.

Moravcsik, Edith 1974. Object-verb agreement. *Working Papers in Language Universals* 15:25-140.

Silverstein, Michael 1976. Hierarchy of features and ergativity. *Grammatical categories in Australian languages*. R.M.W. Dixon, ed. 112-71. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Smith-Stark, T. Cedric 1974. The plurality split. *Papers from the 10th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. M. La Baly, R. Fox, and A. Bruck eds. 657-71.