Motivated versus unmotivated pathways in the evolution of main clause alignment patterns
Oral
Theme Session: Typological hierarchies in synchrony and diachrony

Blevins (2004) and Givón (2008) argue that if we can explain synchronic linguistic patterns via their origins, then we require no synchronic explanation (i,e,. a putative function that is served, or a markedness hierarchy). This paper will discuss four distinct hierarchical alignment patterns, all of which mark the relative places of certain referent (or NP) types on a referential hierarchy. In these systems, personal indices on the verb cross-reference the higher-ranked of two core arguments. Sometimes the lower-ranked argument occurs marked as an oblique (OBVIATIVE) and sometimes a DIRECT/INVERSE morpheme indicates the role of the verbal index. We examine the diachronic sources of each of these patterns in four languages: Panare (Cariban, Venezuela), Potosino Huastec (Mayan, Mexico), Arizona Tewa (Tanoan, USA), Reyesano (Tacanan, Bolivia).

Both Panare and Huastec show a situation where loss of a prior third person morpheme creates a single indexation slot, which is then filled solely by the SAP prefix, thereby creating an unmotivated synchronic hierarchy. In Panare (Payne & Payne 2013), distinct person prefixes index first and second person (SAP) A and P, but not third person except when there is no SAP core argument. The 2P prefix occurs when 1A acts on 2P, the 2A prefix and the 1P proclitic when 2A acts on 1P. A prefix *y-* 'INVERSE' also occurs when 3A acts on SAP P. To create this alignment, Panare lost a 3P prefix from Proto-Cariban, changed from a neutral 1A2P/2A1P form, and reduced the distribution of **j-* 'relator' to create *y-* 'inverse'. In Potosino Huastec (Zavala 1994), the pan-Mayan ergative (Set A) and absolutive (Set B) prefixes are augmented by an inverse-like morpheme (*ta-*, possibly a cislocative); the 3B form was already *Ø-* and the 3A form changed from *in-* to *Ø-*, creating a fairly typical-looking hierarchical system. Colonial records show that the addition of *ta-* came first (already in place by 1767), with *in-* '3A' lost since then.

In Reyesano (Guillaume 2011), second position SAP person clitics became verbal prefixes (invariant for role), interacting with a prior 3A person suffix (which somewhat resembles an inverse morpheme). The set of clitics did not have a third person form, so the absence of third person forms in verbal prefixation again appears to be incidental.

In contrast, the Arizona Tewa system appears to come from a functionally motivated source. Arizona Tewa (Zúñiga 2006) develops hierarchical indexation by reanalysis of a passive clause as the obligatory means of indicating an inverse situation, that is, where 3A acts on SAP P. Thus, the person indexes on the verb reflect only the SAP, but they differ for SAP A (< transitive subject) and SAP P (< passive subject) and third person has differential case: 3A is marked as obviative (< agent of passive) or unmarked (< transitive subject) depending on person or topicality of P. This alignment of form and function is motivated by discourse topicality (as predicted by Givón 1994).