

TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE

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Annotation: *Linguistic typology is a field of linguistics that studies and classifies languages according to their structural features. Its aim is to describe and explain the common properties and the structural diversity of the world's languages. This article intends to give information about typological classification of language.*

Keywords: *linguistics, typology, languages, typological classification.*

A more recent development in typology is the employment of semantic maps, which builds on ideas already developed in the context of research on semantic fields and networks. A semantic map model represents all the meanings of some form (often called ‘marker’), the essential idea being that “multiple uses of a marker are related in a systematic and universal way”. Since the various meanings of some formal element are deemed to cover the same semantic space in all languages, semantic maps are believed to be powerful tools in the analysis of cross-linguistic variation.

Attempts to classify languages by their types rather than by their relationships were made from the beginning of historical linguistics. In 1818 August Von Schlegel proposed a typological classification which was widely followed and elaborated through the 19th century and still has a great popularity. Schlegel's system was based on the number of meaningful elements (morphemes) which could be present in a word and the modification these might undergo. According to this classification, languages can be divided into three types- isolating or analytic, inflectional or synthetic, and agglutinative. If the three types were arranged as a triangular as each language could be placed at some approximate point therein after a statical analysis of its word structure patterns.

1.ISOLATING (analysis): Isolating languages exhibit no formal paradigms. It has only one element of basic meaning per word and in such cases they are

monomorphemic. For example, when, as, since, from, etc. and their grammatical status and class-membership is determined by their syntactic relations with the rest of the sentence in which they occur. In English invariable words such as prepositions, conjunctions and many adverbs are isolating in types. Chinese, several other Southeast Asian languages-Vietnamese are examples of such types. In them the bound morphemes are rare and words containing more than one morpheme are not thereby grammatically different. Words in such languages are assigned to word-classes on the basis of different syntactic functions.

2. INFLECTIONAL: If there are several meaningful elements, but are in some way fused together or are modified in different contexts, the language will be inflectional. In it words having several grammatical forms in which it is difficult to assign each category to a specific and serially identifiable morphemic section. Classical languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek, Sanskrit are the most obvious examples of such type. For example, Latin 'amo' (I love) is morphemically divisible into two morphemes; root /am-/and suffix /-o/; but this suffix, though morphemically not further divisible, marks five separate categories, each syntactically relevant in different ways to other words in sentences in which the form may occur: singular number, first person, present tense, indicative mood and active voice. English nouns such as men, geese, mice, women are inflectional. Inflectional languages were held to represent the highest stage of evolution and the most perfect form of human communication.

3. AGGLUTINATIVE: If there is more than one element of basic meaning, but these were kept apart from one another and undergo no modification, the language is agglutinative. Morphologically complex words in which individual grammatical categories may be easily assigned to morphemes strung together serially in the structure of the word-form exemplify the process of agglutination. Turkish, Sudanese and Japanese are examples of such type with the Turkish as the perfect one. Languages of these types are alike of necessity in respect of word structure. Grammars of these languages are very different in other respects. Typological classification will ultimately be based on all the systems of language,

phonological as well as grammatical and semantic. But recently an approach for combining all these systems has been made available. The most complete typology based on grammatical-semantic is that of Fink.

Fink viewed man's use of speech as consisting of two essential processes:

1. analyzing a real situation into its components.
2. restoring it to a whole via the words of language.

As an illustrative situation, a man approaching would be analyzed into two components: an actor and an action. While reporting this situation, a Chinese speaker matches each component with a word: ta he lai 'come'. A Turkish speaker would use only one word: 'gelior', combining two situational elements while an English speaker would use three "he is coming", introducing more words than three are components in the situation.

According to the analysis of the situation, Fink assumed eight types. On one side is the language like Turkish in which a word indicates several elements of a situation, on the other, the language like English in which a word indicates less than one element of a situation. Chinese provides an ideal fit between any situation and its restoration in language by representing one element with one word. Moreover, the eight types Fink proposed were not meant to be exhaustive, for others may still be discovered or may develop in future.

Though Fink gave examples with commentaries of these eight types, he found only sporadic successor to apply his system more widely and thoroughly. When typological study was again undertaken, as by Sapir, purely formal analysis was preferred to that based on form and meaning. Two approaches to typological classification have been made by structural linguists, without relation to each other. Independently of typologies based on grammar, phonologists have attempted to set up various types of sound systems.

Typologists, dealing with grammar, especially morphology, have attempted to determine general grammatical features by which languages may be typed. Those proposed by Sapir were determined from characteristics observed in a wide variety of languages, not like Fink's from the application of semantics and

psychology. Greenberg so modified Sapir's approach that typological classification may finally become widely applied. His modification permits classification of languages by selected structural features rather than by the entire language. In both phonological and grammatical classification for types any structural features may be utilized which are broadly represented in a language.

In phonological classification much effort has been devoted to types of arrangements of phonemes. Some languages have triangular system of vowels, i.e. Arabic dialects. Classical Latin has five vowel system or some dialects of English have nine vowel system.

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