

Typological Classification of Languages

Definition

- Languages are described by their *types* rather than by their origins and relationships
- The type under which languages are classified follows morphological classification

Language Types

- Isolating
- Agglutinating/agglutinative
- Inflecting/flectional/fusional
- Polysynthetic/incorporating

Isolating languages

- One-to-one correspondence between words and morphemes
- One word formations
- Free morphemes are the only forms used
- The “word” (free morpheme) can occur by itself and is not dependent on any other morphemes.

Isolating languages

- It is an unalterable unit whose function in the sentence is not usually marked by some grammatical device (affix, auxiliary) but only by position.
- Since the boundaries of syllables and morphemes *coincide*, these languages are sometimes referred to as monosyllabic.

Isolating Languages

- Examples: Chinese, Vietnamese, and many languages of South East Asia
- Ex (Chinese): 我看他 *wo kan ta*
“I see him”; “I am seeing him”
他看我朋友 *Ta kan wo peng you*
“He sees my friend”

Flexional/Fusional/Inflecting Languages

- Grammatical devices like *affixes* or internal changes in words to show grammatical relationships
- Free and bound morphemes are united
- Ex. Walk, walk-**s**, walk-**ing**, walk-**ed**
- Internal change: mouse-mice
goose-geese

Flexional/Fusional/Inflecting Languages (2)

- Several units of meaning are contained within a single word
 - Latin, **ib** □ “I shall go” (base: *i* “go”; *-b(i)-* is the future tense morpheme; *-□-* ‘is the first person singular
 - Sanskrit **vad** □ **mi** (*vad-* the base ‘speak’; *(a)mi*) ‘first person singular’

Agglutinating/Agglutinative Languages

- A type of flexional language with the exception that the morphemes attached have a separate existence (= free morpheme)
- Implication: the boundaries between the morphemes are always clear because their shape remains the same

Agglutinating/Agglutinative Languages: Example

- Turkish *adam* 'man'

- nominative: adam (sg) adam-lar (pl)
- accusative: adam-i (sg) adam-lar-i (pl)
- genitive: adam-in adam-lar-in (pl)
- dative: adam-a adam-lar-a
- locative adam-da adam-lar-da
- ablative adam-dan adam-lar-dan

Agglutinative vs Flexional

Hungarian

- Nom. *su* “water”
- Gen. *su-num*
- Acc. *su-yu*
- Abl. *su-dan*

Latin

- *aqua*
- *aquæ*
- *aquam*
- *aqu*□

Japanese *tabesaserareru*

- *tabe* “eat” (the base)
- *sase* “the causative element (i.e. to cause someone to do something)”
- *rare* “the passive form”
- *ru* “the infinitive”

Swahili

- Grammatical changes are indicated by *prefixes*:
 - *-toto* (indicating ‘child’: non-grammatical)
 - *m-toto* (‘child’ singular: grammatical word)
 - *wa-toto* (“children”)
 - *m-tu* (“man-sg.”)
 - *wa-tu* (“men”)

Swahili (2)

- Verbs: The time of the action expressed by the verb is marked by a “tense prefix”:
 - *na-* (present)
 - *li-* (past)
 - *ta-* (future)

Swahili (3)

- Verb base *soma* 'read'
 - *watoto wanasoma*
 - *watoto walisoma*
 - *ninasoma* (*ni-* is first person)
 - *unasoma* (*u-* is you-sg.)
 - *ulisoma*
 - *utasoma*

Polysynthetic/Incorporating Languages

- These languages make use of affixation and often incorporate what English would represent with nouns and adverbs.
- The word forms are often very long and morphologically complex
- Languages: Inuktitut (Baffin Island Eskimo), Oneida)

Polysynthetic/Incorporating Languages (2)

- *g-nagla-sl-i-zak-s*
 - *g* “I” (first person)
 - *nagla* (conveys idea of) “living”
 - *sl* (causes *nagla* to be noun-like; the combination conveys the idea of “village”)
 - *i* verbal prefix, indicates that *zak* is to carry a verbal idea
 - *zak* ‘look for’
 - *s* ‘continued action’

Polysynthetic/Incorporating Languages (3)

- *ngirruunthingapukani*
- I past for some time eat repeatedly

Non-exclusi vity

- None of these four types are mutually exclusive.
- In English, there is a movement towards a more isolating type of structure.
- Yet, all elements appear in English.

English

- Isolating: *The boy will ask the girl.*
- Inflecting: *The biggest boys will be asking all the girls to the party.*
- Agglutinating: *anti-dis-establish-ment-arian-ism*
- Incorporating: “*whacchamacallit*”
“This is the *whatchamacallit*.”