

Typology: Analyzing Linguistic Diversity across Languages of the World Sommer Semester 2017

Module: Variation, Evolution, and Change

Type: Hauptseminar

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Webpage: http://www.christianbentz.de/teaching_typo2017.html

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1 Project List

1.1 Phonetics/Phonology

- Project 1: Test the following hypothesis: If a language does *not* have fricatives, then it is more likely to be spoken in mainland Australia than outside of it.
- Project 2: Test the following hypothesis: Languages using clicks (no para-linguistic usage) have generally bigger sound inventories than languages not using clicks.
- Project 3: Test the following hypothesis: If a language has ejectives then it is also likely to have nominal case marking.

1.2 Morphology

- Project 4: Is there a trade-off between morphological marking and usage of tones? Such that languages that extensively use tonal marking tend to have less morphological markers?
- Project 5: Test the hypothesis that number neutral languages tend to have numeral classifiers instead (see Klamer, under review: p.22).
- Project 6: Test Greenberg's Universal 27: "If a language is exclusively suffixing, it is postpositional; if it is exclusively prefixing, it is prepositional."

1.3 Lexicon

- Project 7: Do languages with more speakers (bigger population size) have more/less loanwords than languages with fewer speakers?
- Project 8: Is the status of a language (national, widely used, extinct, etc.) associated with the number of basic color terms in a language?

1.4 Word Order

- Project 9: Test the hypothesis that if a language has adpositions, then it is less likely to use serial verbs. This claim was first made by Bickerton (2016: p.117) with reference to Creole languages.
- Project 10: Test Greenberg's Universal 41: "If in a language the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as the dominant order, the language almost always has a case system."

1.5 Other

- Project 11: Are languages of Tasmania most similar to Australian languages, Austronesian languages or Papuan languages? Note that the information on Tasmanian languages is sparse, so any kind of information (lexical, phonological, morphological, word order) is acceptable here.
- Project 12: Give an estimation (or range of estimations) of how many languages have been spoken in the world until today (including living languages). Tipp: First try to get estimations for the earliest date of appearance of human language (this is highly controversial) from the literature, then try to get estimations of the birth death/rate of languages.

2 References

Bickerton, Derek (2016). *Roots of language*. Classics in Linguistics 3, Language Science Press.

Greenberg, Joseph H. (1963). Some universals of language with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements. In: J. H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of Language*. London: MIT Press.

Klamer, Marian (under review). Typology and grammaticalization in the Papuan languages of Timor, Alor and Pantar. To appear in: Narrog, Heiko & Prashant Pardeshi (eds.), *Grammaticalization from a typological perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.