LOT Summerschool 2003 Tilburg
Typology: interpreting world-wide patterns of variation
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Monday: On establishing a typology
Tuesday: What it means to be rare
Wednesday:What can typology tell us about possible languages?
Thursday: What do numbers mean?
Friday: Towards a (dia)chronic typology

1 Typology vs. cross-linguistic research

Typology is 'easy', making it sensible is difficult

A) domain (comparability)

– pronouns? verbal inflection? agreement? How to choose?

– possibility: only pronouns (but: often functionally secondary, sometimes derived)

– possibility: choose 'main' marking (but: which is the main marking?)

– possibility: include all as separate systems (but: how to delimit?)

B) tertium comparationis (function & formal characteristics)

– shifter

– speech-act participants

– specialised for this function

– minimally a speaker/addressee opposition

– strict defintion of paradigm

C) which are the primitives? (cross-linguistic research)

– various ad-hoc limitation: no gender, spatial marking, politeness, kin marking, reflexives,

reciprocals, logophoric pronouns, bipersonal marking (fused subject/object), etc...

– never believe a set of primitives that does not have numerous delimitations!

D) typology! (controlled comparison)

2 The distinction of persons

Tékhne Grammatiké by Dionysius Thrax (c. 100 BC):

Prósopa tría, prôton, deúteron, tríton; prôton mèn af hoû ho lógos, deúteron dè pròs hòn ho lógos, tríton dè perì hoû ho lógos. (Uhlig 1883: 51)

There are three persons, first, second and third. The first is the originator of the utterance, the second the person to whom it is addressed and the third the topic of the utterance. (Kemp 1987: 181)

Goffman (1979) argues for a decomposition of the notions 'speaker' and 'addressee'. The traditional notion 'speaker', he pleads, is a cluster of various communicational functions, like 'animator' (i.e. 'the sounding box'), 'author' (i.e. 'the agent who scripts the lines') and 'principal' (i.e. 'the party to whose position the words attest') (Goffman 1979: 16-17, cf. Levinson 1988: 169). Likewise, the traditional notion of 'addressee' is to be decomposed into, at least, the functions 'hearer', 'unaddressed', 'over-hearer', 'bystander' and 'eavesdropper' (Goffman 1979: 8-9).

The ratified hearer in two-person talk is necessarily also the *addressed* one, that is, the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over the speaking role. But obviously two-person encounters, however common, are not the only kind; three or more official participants are often found. In such cases it will often be feasible for the current speaker to address his remarks to the circle as a whole, encompassing all his hearers in his glance, according them something like equal status. But, more likely, the speaker will, at least during periods of his talk, address his remarks to one listener, so that among official hearers one must distinguish the addressed recipient form *unaddressed* ones. (Goffman 1979: 9, italics in original)

Quite probably, the universal tendency in languages to distinguish, in pronominal categories or elsewhere, primarily and prototypically the two deictic categories of first and second person, is related closely to the superordinate categories of speaker and addressee/recipient that are the basis of the turn-taking system. (Levinson 1988: 176)

3   Third person?

The form that is called the third person really does contain an indication of a statement about someone or something but not related to a specific "person". The variable and properly "personal" element of these denominations is here lacking. It is indeed the "absent" of the Arab grammarians. … The consequence must be formulated clearly: the "third person" is not a "person"; it is really the verbal form whose function is to express the *non-person*. (Benveniste 1971: 197-198)

[A zero] is therefore possible only under specific circumstances and in a specific context, namely one that allows, or even favours, the evocation of the (absent) paradigmatic counterpart. A hearer, however, can be expected to notice an absence 'automatically' only if the missing counterpart is itself 'automatic' – i.e. very probable – in the particular context. In short, a syntactic zero is possibly only when the non-occurring (positive) alternative is so likely that it in fact constitutes the norm. (Garcia & van Putte 1989: 369-370)

BURIAT (Poppe 1960: 57)

a. *jaba-na-b*
    go-PRES-1SG
    'I go.'
b. *jaba-na-š*
    go-PRES-2SG
    'You go.'
c. *jaba-na-ø*
    go-PRES-3SG
    'He/she/it goes.'

Yidiɲ (Dixon 1977: 527, 516, 528, 531)

    a.   *ɲayu*   *ḍuŋga:na*
           1SG.PRON   run.PURP
           'I had to run.'

    b.   *ɲundu*   *gana*   *waŋga:ḍin*
           2SG.PRON   try   get up.IMPERF
           'You try to wake up.'

    c.   *ḍuŋga:ɲ*
           run.PAST
           'He ran away.'

    d.   *banḍi:ldaɲu* *bama*   *ŋabi*
           find come   person   many
           'I came and found lots of people.'

Fourth person? Either subcategory of third person (better called 'obviative') or inclusive (see below).

4   Plural persons?

Semantically awkward, but also morphologically unprobable:

    In the great majority of languages, the pronominal plural does not coincide with the nominal plural. (Benveniste 1971: 202)

It is rather common to find pronouns with morphologically transparent plural forms; plurals pronouns that are built by regular derivation from the singular forms. Yet, the pronominal marking for plurality is in most of these cases (synchronically) different from the nominal marking for plurality or it is only optionally used.

5   The inclusive/exclusive distinction

Grammatica o arte de la lengua general de los Indios de los Reynos del Peru by Domingo de Santo Tomas (1560):

    The plural of this pronoun *ñóca* is *ñocánchic* or *ñocáyco*, which mean 'we'. It is to be noted that between *ñocánchic* and *ñocáyco* there are two differences, one intrinsic, due to their meaning, the other extrinsic, due to the verb that corresponds to them. … The first is that although *ñocánchic* and *ñocáyco* both mean 'we', *ñocánchic* means 'we', with the connotation of including the person as such with whom we are speaking; like when speaking with Indians, when we want to give to understand that they also take part, and that they are included in the meaning of what we say with this pronoun *we*; as when one would say: 'God created us', we will use that pronoun, *ñocánchic*, that is, 'we, including also the Indians'. But if we want to exclude them from the meaning or the speech … in this language (to be more explicit) it is not necessary to add any clarification, except to use the pronoun *ñocáyco*, meaning 'we', with the connotation of excluding the person or persons with whom we are talking from the plurality. (de Santo Tomás 1560: 8-9, own translation)

6   Inclusive/exclusive in the second person?

A distinction might also be made between an 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' use of the 'second person plural' (in a slightly different sense of 'inclusive' versus 'exclusive'). The English pronoun *you* may of course be either singular or plural … As a plural form, it may be either 'inclusive' (referring only to the hearers present – in which case is the plural of the singular *you*, in the same sense as *cows* is the plural of *cow*) or 'exclusive' (referring to some other person, or persons, in addition to the hearer, or hearers). (Lyons 1968: 277)

7   Only one speaker and addressee!

A true first person plural [1+1] is impossible, because there can never be more than one self' (Boas 1911: 39, number-notation added)

[examples are] football chanting, ritual mass speaking, as in a church service, the mass speaking of children at play and finally the reactions of a concert audience. There are many other forms of mass speaking, such as what occurs at political rallies. … In order for there to be mass speakings at all, the members of the speaking group or groups must achieve a high degree of co-ordination of their actions. (Mühlhäusler & Harré 1990: 201-202)

In principle it is possible for a nuber of people to be speaking togehter at once … and even more that many people may be addressed at one time. However, this is not the norm. Indeed, speech in unison requires careful planning (and usually extensive practice), and eye contact may be made with only one person at a time. (McGregor 1989: 440).
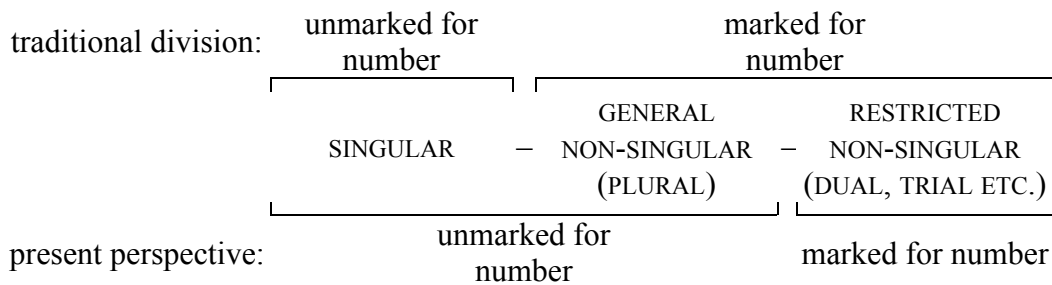
8   Two different inclusives

When, therefore, we speak of a first person plural, we mean logically either self and person addressed [1+2], or self and person or persons spoken of [1+3], or finally, self, person or persons addressed, and person or persons spoken of [1+2+3]. … I do not know of any language expressing in a separate form the combination of the three persons [1+2+3], probably because this idea readily coalesces with the idea of self and person spoken to [1+2]. (Boas 1911: 39, number-notation added)

The exclusive plural [1+3] excludes the person or persons addressed. The limited inclusive plural [1+2] includes the speaker and the person or persons addressed, and excludes any other who may be present or referred to. The generalized inclusive plural [1+2+3] includes the speaker, person, or persons addressed, and any other person or person present, or absent and referred to. (Foster & Foster 1948: 19, number-notation added)

The 1st dual label is not completely accurate, as the use is restricted to cooperative action by one speaker and one hearer; no one else may be included. … There is no substantiation from the structure of the rest of the language for the existence of a dual number in Ilocano. (Thomas 1955: 205).

9 Metalanguage

– 'group' instead of 'plural', real number marking starts only with the dual

traditional division:	unmarked for number		marked for number	
	SINGULAR	–	GENERAL NON-SINGULAR (PLURAL)	– RESTRICTED NON-SINGULAR (DUAL, TRIAL ETC.)
present perspective:	unmarked for number			marked for number

– first and second person can only occur once

Group	Description
~~1+1~~	~~'we', mass speaking~~
1+2	'we', including addressee, excluding other
1+3	'we', including other, excluding addressee
1+2+3	'we', complete
~~2+2~~	~~'you-all', only present audience~~
2+3	'you-all', addressee(s) and others
3+3	'they'

Exemplified with Ilocano pronouns:

– Traditional analyses (Bloomfield 1942)

	singular	dual	plural
1 inclusive	*co*	*ta*	*tayo*
1 exclusive			*mi*
2	*mo*	*yo*	
3	*na*	*da*	

– Thomas (1955) proposal (emic approach)

	minimal	augmented			
1+2	*ta*	*tayo*	1+2	+3
1	*co*	*mi*	1	+3
2	*mo*	*yo*	2	+3
3	*na*	*da*	3	+3

–Cross-linguistic scheme (etic approach)

		group	
		ta	1+2
	singular	*tayo*	1+2+3
1	*co*	*mi*	1+3
2	*mo*	*yo*	2+3
3	*na*	*da*	3+3

10 Typology

Starting with only four categories ('first peson complex'). Theoretically 15 possibilities (without overlap).

1	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
1+3	B			B	B	B	B		A	A			B	B		
1+2	C	B	B		A	C	C			B	B	B		A	A	
1+2+3	D	C	C	C	C	A	B	B	A		A		A	B		

Result of typology: only ten attested, of which 5 are common.

Common

1	A		A	A	A	A
1+3			A		B	B
1+2	A	B		B		C
1+2+3			B	C	B	D

Rara

1	A	A
1+3			B
1+2	B		C
1+2+3	C	B

Rarissima

1	A	A	A
1+3		B	B
1+2	B	A	
1+2+3	C	B	A

Summary of common patterns:

Is there any specialised form for non-singular?				
No	Yes			
	Is the inclusive specialised?			
	No	Yes		
		Is the exclusive specialised?		
		No	Yes	
			Is the inclusive split?	
			No	Yes
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
no-we	unified-we	only-inclusive	inclusive/exclusive	minimal/augmented

Including all eight categories, there are 4140 theoretical possiblities, of which (only) 63 have been attested. Some major generalisations:

HORIZONTAL HOMOPHONY HIERARCHY I (WITH INCLUSIVE/EXCLUSIVE)
   no homophony < 3 = 3+3 < 2 = 2+3 < 1 = 1+3

HORIZONTAL HOMOPHONY HIERARCHY II (NO INCLUSIVE/EXCLUSIVE)
        no homophony < 3 = 3+3 < 2 = 2+3 < 1 = 1+3, 1+2 and 1+2+3

EXPLICITNESS HIERARCHY ('RICHNESS OF PARADIGM')

singular homophony > group homophony > unified-we > inclusive/exclusive > minimal/augmented

Using the following scheme:

GROUP

SINGULAR

	1+2
	1+2+3
1	1+3
2	2+3
3	3+3

the generalisation lead to the following typolology of person paradigms:

singular homophony	group homophony	unified-we	inclusive/ exclusive	minimal/ augmented

>   >   >   >

∨   ∨

∨   ∨

∨   ∨

no-we   only-inclusive
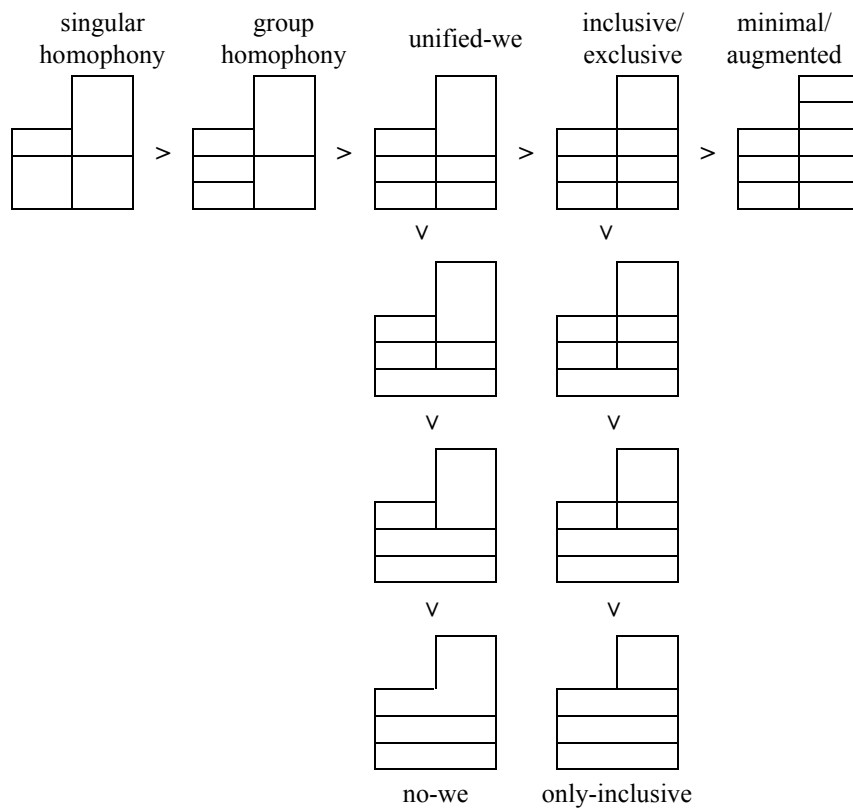
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