



Semantic Shifts

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Semantic Shifts: From lexicon to grammar. Diachronic and typological perspectives

Areal Course 3

The Americas

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Each session will be on some area of grammar of special typological interest in the Americas, given jointly by the two presenters. The foci will be on the semantic patterns that emerge from the formal constructions, the diachronic pathways by which they may have developed, areal patterns, and the mechanisms by which patterns might spread.

1. Possession

Predicative vs Attributive possession

Semantic distinctions

Possessibility

Unpossessible nouns

Obligatorily possessed nouns

Optionally possessed nouns

Alienability distinctions

Classes across the languages

Affectedness

When possession is not really possession

Formal marking

Locus of marking: head, dependent, both

Order of possessor and possessed

Classificatory possessive constructions

2. Classificatory systems

Semantic categories that emerge from sets of entities classified

Diachronic pathways leading to classifiers.

Areality of the patterns

Classification by noun incorporation (North America)

Inventories of classificatory incorporated nouns

Kinds of entities they classify

Diachronic pathways of development

Areal patterns

Nominal classifiers (South America)

Inventories of classifiers across the languages

The classes of nouns they classify

Their distributions and functions

Diachronic sources and pathways of development

3. Postural classifications

‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘lie’, etc.

Areal patterns across North and South America

Subsequent grammaticalization

Development into tense in North America

4. Verbal number

Predominance of verbal expression and distinctions

particularly in North America

Basic number distinctions: distributives, collectives

Formal expression

Reduplication

Affixation

Lexical organization

Lexical encoding of verbal number

Different verb roots for ‘one to go’, ‘multiple to go’, etc.

Rich lexical organization along these lines in certain areas

How such patterns could spread areally

Bilinguals could systematically choose hyponyms
that include number as part of their meanings.

With the added frequency, the hyponyms
could come to be basic-level terms.

Bilinguals could use derivational morphology
to create new stems with number distinctions

These morphologically complex stems
could gradually lose their transparency.

5. Causatives and applicatives

Basic functions of causatives and applicatives

Sociative causation: South America

Inventories of applicatives across the languages

(benefactive, instrumental, locative, reason, etc.)

Diachronic sources of causatives and applicatives

(verbs like ‘make’, ‘give’, adpositions like ‘for’)

Frequent homonymy between causatives and applicatives

How the syncretism could come about.

Further developments of causative and applicative morphology

North America: Nominalizers