



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

Semantic Shifts

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The Ethiopian Linguistic Area: Typological and Diachronic Perspectives

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The Ethiopian Linguistic Area at the Horn of Africa comprises languages of different branches of the Afroasiatic macro-family and, to a lesser extent, of the disputed Nilo-Saharan phylum. The linguistic area was established by Charles A. Ferguson as early as 1976. The boundaries of the contact zone and the criteria used to define it have ever since been disputed, but it is commonly agreed that languages spoken in the Ethiopian highlands show many signs of convergence. This course gives an overview of the research on Ethiopian languages, with special emphasis on contact-induced phenomena. It is based on the published literature as well as own fieldwork data on a Cushitic and an Omotic language of southwestern Ethiopia.

Lecture 1: Introduction to languages in Ethiopia (and beyond)

This lecture is a basic introduction into the languages spoken in Ethiopia and neighbouring countries: i.e. Cushitic, Omotic and Ethio-Semitic languages as well as languages traditionally classified as “Nilo-Saharan”. It gives an introduction into their genetic classification, discusses their sociolinguistic situation (e.g. lingua francas, Ethiopian language policy, language endangerment) and addresses typologically interesting features of their phonology (e.g. ejective and implosive consonants) and morphosyntax (e.g. marked nominative case system, demonstrative systems, converbs).

Lecture 2: A critical assessment of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area

In this lecture, findings of previous research on the Ethiopian Linguistic Area is summarized and the defining criteria that have been proposed by different authors (and questioned or refuted by others) are critically assessed. Apart from discussing criteria for the linguistic area as a whole, I will also give an overview of the sub-areas that have been proposed and their shared unique grammatical features.

Lecture 3: Contact-induced grammatical features

This lecture presents various case studies of grammatical features that can be assumed to be contact-induced rather than the result of language-internal developments or inheritance. The focus will be on shared multifunctionality, i.e. on non-cognate grammatical morphemes that have developed identical (or similar) function bundles across the languages of the area. Other topics discussed are the development of switch-reference marking in the Highland East Cushitic-Omotic contact zone, the encoding of elevation in the demonstrative systems of the Lowland East Cushitic-Omotic contact zone and the grammaticalization of ‘know’ into a marker of experiential perfect (‘have (n)ever V-ed’).

Lecture 4: Shared polysemy and lexicalization patterns

This lecture takes a look at the influence of language contact in the domain of lexical semantics. I will start with a critical review of Richard Hayward's influential work on shared polysemy and then discuss recent and ongoing research on shared lexicalization patterns in the semantic fields of kinship, perception verbs, food preparation and agriculture (especially the cultivation of *ensete ventricosum*) and interjections.