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A Typology of Noun
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ALEXANDRA Y. AIKHENVALD

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For Bob, okojibotee

Preface

This book aims at providing a cross-linguistic analysis of noun classification systems across the languages of the world, also dealing with a variety of other problems such as the morphological status of the markers of these categories, agreement phenomena, and the syntactic and semantic classification of adjectives and numbers. It is generally accepted that linguistic categorization of nouns is a reflection of human mind and culture. The present study thus has far-reaching implications for cross-cultural as well as cross-linguistic studies of human cognition, and will provide new insights concerning the mechanisms by which human language functions.

Languages with extensive systems of noun classification devices, especially those which combine classifiers and genders, present a true challenge for the typologist. My first encounter with these unusual systems was through fieldwork on Tariana and Baniwa, two closely related North Arawak languages spoken in Northwest Amazonia. The more I worked on the topic, the more exotic and unusual systems I encountered, especially among little-known South American languages, and languages of the South Pacific. This book came into being as an attempt to integrate these systems into a cross-linguistically based typological framework.

This study is an up-to-date introduction to the field, and will be of value not only to a wide variety of linguists and linguistic students but also to anthropologists, cognitive psychologists, and philosophers who are interested in language and the mind. It can be used both as a sourcebook for further typological studies, and as a textbook. The discussion in the book is in terms of basic linguistic theory, the framework of linguistic analysis in terms of which most grammars are cast, and in terms of which significant typological generalizations are postulated. (I have avoided using any of the more specific formalisms, which come and go with such frequency.)

Some terminological clarifications are in order. First, my conception of a lexical entry for 'noun' roughly corresponds to the notion of 'lexeme' as outlined by Lyons (1977 vol. 1: 19). Second, throughout the book 'linguistic categorization of a noun' is used to mean 'linguistic categorization of the referent of a noun', just as in many linguistic usages 'human noun' is a short way of saying 'noun with a human referent'. Third, the term 'noun categorization' is used here in a sense close to the 'noun classification' (cf. Craig 1986a; Derbyshire and Payne 1990) or 'nominal classification' (cf. Harvey and Reid 1997) employed by other authors. The term 'classifier system' refers to a grammatical system of noun categorization device(s) in a particular language.

In order to limit the book to a reasonable size, I have only been able to refer to a portion of the available literature. There are many other sources that I have consulted, which only provide additional exemplification for points that are already well covered. When a language is introduced for the first time, its genetic affiliation and the source of information on it are given in parentheses; further on, this information is only repeated where relevant. Examples, tables and diagrams are numbered separately within each chapter.

The orthography used in the examples and language names follows that of the sources (unless indicated otherwise).

A study like this could only be definitive when good and thorough descriptions have been provided for most of the world's languages; we are at present a long way from this situation. Nevertheless, I hope that this study will provide a framework within which fieldworkers and typologists will be able to work, and which can be amended and adjusted as new data and new insights emerge.

It is my hope that this book will encourage people to study noun classification devices, especially in little-known or undescribed languages, going out into the field and documenting languages threatened by extinction (before it is too late to do so).

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Plea

This book is far from being the last word on noun categorization devices. I welcome reactions, counterexamples, new ideas and data, to further develop, refine, and improve the generalizations put forward here. Please send them to me at Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, La Trobe University, Bundoora Vic., 3083 Australia.

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List of Abbreviations

A	subject of a transitive verb	DEF	definite
ABL	ablative	DEIC	deictic
ABS	absolutive	DEM	demonstrative
ACC	accusative	DER	derivational
ADJ	adjectivizer	DET	determiner
ADV	adverb	DIM	diminutive
AFF	affix	DIR	directional
AGR	agreement	DIST	distal
ALIM	alimentary possession	DS	different subject
AN, ANIM	animate	DU	dual
ANA	anaphoric	DUR	durative
ARG.MAN	argument manipulating derivation	EMPH	emphatic
ART	article	ERG	ergative
ASP	aspect	EXCL	exclusive
ATT	attributive	EXT	extended
AUG	augmented	EYEW.PRES	eyewitness present
AUX	auxiliary	F, FEM, f, fem	feminine
BENEFACT	benefactive	FRUST	frustrative
CAUS	causative	FUT	future
CL	classifier	GEN	generic
CL.HAB	classifier: habitat	GN	genitive
CMPL	completed	HAB	habitual
COLL	collective	HON	honorific
COMIT	comitative	HORIZ	horizontal
COMPL	completive	HUM	human
CONC	concordial	HUMIL	humiliative
CONJ	conjunctive	IMAG	imaginary
CONT	continuous	IMP	impersonal
CONTR	contrast	IMPF	imperfective
CURV	curved	INAN, INANIM	inanimate
CV	connective	INCL, incl	inclusive
CYLIDR	cylindrical	INDEF	indefinite
DAT	dative	INS	instrumental
DEC	declarative	INT	intensifier
		INTER	interrogative
		IRREG	irregular form or shape

xxvi *List of Abbreviations*

LIG	ligature	PRED	predicative
	vowel	PREF	prefix
LINK	linker	PRES	present
LIV.BEING	living	prim	primary
	being	PRO	1/2/3 person
LOC	locative		proform
M, MASC, m, masc	masculine	PROB	probability
MENS	mensural	PROGR	progressive
	classifier	PRON	pronoun
MIN	minimal	PURP	purposive
MOD	modal	PX	proximity
N, NEUT	neuter	QUAL	qualifier
NCL	noun class	QUANT	quantifier
NEG	negative	RE	referential
NF, nf	non-	REC	reciprocal
	feminine	REFL	reflexive
NOM	nominative	REL	relativizer
NONPOSS, NPOSS	non-	REL.CL	relational classifier
	possessed		
NP	nonpast	REM.P.INFR	remote past inferred
NUM.CL	numeral classifier	RES	resultative
O	object of a transitive verb	S	subject of an intransitive verb
OBJ	object	sec	secondary
PART	participle	sg, SG	singular
PASS	passive	sp	species
pcl	paucal or plural number	SUBJ	subject
		SUBORD	subordinating
PERF	perfective	SUFF	suffix
pf	perfect	TA	tense-aspect marker
PI	past imperfective	TAM	tense-aspect-mood marker
PL	plural	TH	thematic
POSS	possessive	THEM.CONTR	thematic contrast
POSS.CL	possessive classifier	TNS	tense
		TOP	topic
PP	past perfective	TOPADV	topic advancing voice
PRECONT	precontemporary tense	TOPO	topical O
		VB	verbalizer
		VCL	verbal classifier
		VERT	vertical