Current Research

Extended Exponence in Cross-Linguistic Perspective

In Batsbi (also known as Tsova-Tush), a language of the Nakh group of the Nakh-Daghestanian language family, markers of gender-number agreement can occur simultaneously in several positions in a single verb form, as illustrated in (1), where these markers are glossed CM.

(1) tiši\(^a\) c’a dah d-ex-d-o-d-anö
    old house(d/d).ABS PV CM-destroy-CM.TR-PRES-CM-EVID\(\bar{I}\)
    ‘They are evidently tearing down the old house.’

The use of more than one morpheme to encode a feature or feature bundle (here gender and number) has been called extended exponence. The existence of extended exponence poses a challenge to morpheme-based accounts of morphology, as observed by Matthews (1972, 1974). Relying on the notion of feature-form biuniqueness, post-Bloomfieldian linguistics conceives of features as being expended or used up once they are realized by one morpheme. Yet such repetition, sometimes with allomorph variation, is found in several of the languages of the Nakh-Daghestanian family, as well as in several in the Kiranti subgroup of Tibeto-Burman, and in other languages. The pattern in (1), with more than two morphemes encoding gender and number, raises questions of typological distribution (for example, do such patterns occur only in languages of certain types?), diachronic origin (how and why do such patterns originate?), and linguistic theory (how can we account for systems of this type?).

The goal of this research is a comprehensive and integrated account of extended exponence of all types. Specifically, this involves (a) characterization of the extent of variation of the pattern, (b) a statement of constraints on the pattern, if any, (c) discussion of the relation of the pattern to a variety of theoretical proposals, and (d) a description of the origins of these patterns in the languages studied.


Selected publications from this project: