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Non-verbal predication: theory, typology, diachrony

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12. Conclusion

Apart from the partial conclusions drawn at the relevant places, two major generalizations have presented themselves in the preceding chapters. The first of these is that the organization of systems of non-verbal predication is to a large extent determined by the parts-of-speech systems of the languages concerned. The degree of flexibility within the parts-of-system of a language determines (i) the degree of predicability within its system of non-verbal predication. This degree of predicability, in its turn, determines (ii) the way expression formats are distributed across non-verbal predication types, (iii) the extent to which the two zero-strategies may be used, and (iv) defines the potential processes of auxiliarization. These correlations are summarized in Figure 64.

| Parts-of-speech system | Flexible | | | Specialized | | | Rigid | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------|-------------|------------------------|--------|-------|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| Predicability | 4 | | | 3 | 2 | 1/0 | | |
| Zero-strategy | zero-1 and zero-2 | | | | | zero-2 | | |
| Expression patterns | Pres/Non-pres All alike | | Many patterns | | | Eq/Loc | | |
| Auxiliary predication types | Property assigning | | | | Classifying/Localizing | | | |

Figure 64. Non-verbal predication and parts of speech

The relevance of the typology of parts-of-speech systems, as presented in chapter 4 of this study, is not restricted to the typology of systems of non-verbal predication, but is also reflected in other areas, the most important one probably being the typology of systems of subordination. Here too flexible languages seem to use their categories more freely, in the sense that non-finite subordinate constructions are used more often than in rigid languages. All this suggests that the typology of parts-of-speech systems may be used as a major classifying parameter in linguistic typology. There are signs that it interacts with other such parameters, such as word order typology: flexible languages often seem to pay for their flexibility by having rigid word order or extensive function marking.

A second major generalization that has been arrived at is that localizing, property assigning, and equative non-verbal predications constitute the three major types of

non-verbal predication. The class of property assigning predications plays a crucial role within this threefold division. Where this predication type is available, (i) it constitutes a bridge between equative and localizing predications with respect to processes of copularization, which, in their turn, may lead to a wide variety of expression patterns, (ii) it serves as the starting point for the application of the zero-1 strategy, and (iii) it may be used as a mould for the development of auxiliary predication types.

Since the availability of property assigning predications is largely determined by the parts-of-speech system of the language concerned, there is an important interaction between the properties related to the parts-of-speech system on the one hand, and the properties resulting from the presence or absence of a class of property assigning predications on the other. This interaction is visible in Figure 64, which shows that only in languages having a class of adjectival predicates (or a class of flexible predicates that may be used in adjectival function) (i) many different expression patterns are used, (ii) the zero-1 strategy is used, and (iii) auxiliary predications of the property assigning type are used.

The two major conclusions presented here could be arrived at thanks to three differences between the approach followed in this book and previous studies, each of which was induced by theoretical considerations. First, this study has generalized across constructions with and without a copula, following the approach formulated in Dik (1980). Second, and following necessarily from the first consideration, classes of predicates have been defined in terms of their non-predicative uses, so that a strict separation could be made between various classes of predicate used predicatively. Third, by separating predicable from non-predicable non-verbal predication types, this study could concentrate on non-verbal predication types rather than on lexical fields within which non-verbal predications may figure.