On the typology of the psych-alternation:

Does morphological directionality influence syntax?

INTRODUCTION. We report on the methodology and preliminary results of an ongoing project on the causative alternation within the experiential domain, i.e. the psych alternation. Languages differ with respect to the morphological structure of their verbal inventory in the psych domain: Some languages derive intransitive experiencer-subject (ES) verbs from transitive experiencer-object (EO) verbs (see (1a)) by morpho-syntactic operations such as stative passivization (e.g. German, English), reflexivization (e.g. German, Spanish), or mediopassive *genus verbi* (e.g. Greek, Icelandic). Other languages employ transitivizing operations of causativization (see (1b)), e.g. by means of causative affixes (e.g. Turkish, Japanese, Yucatec Maya) or the embedding under causative predicates (e.g. Korean, Chinese). Still other languages do not show an overt asymmetry in morphological marking, for instance in cases of conversion (s. (1c), see ambitransitive in Nichols 2004), or when a language has verb bases that are used as transitives or intransitives by means of suffixation (see Hungarian *megrém-ít* 'frightens', *megrém-ül* 'gets frightened'; called double derivation in Nichols et al. 2004) or by means of combining them with transitive or intransitive auxiliary verbs (Basque).

(1)   *Morphological structure of experiencer verbs*
        a.   transitive EO basis   → intransitive ES derivation
              ekeln ‚disgust‘   *sich ekeln* ‚REFL disgust‘   (German)
        b.   intransitive ES Basis   → transitive EO derivation
              chi'chnak 'be annoyed'   *chi'chnak-kuns-* 'be.annoyed-CAUS' (Yucatec)
        c.   underspecified (transitive EO/intransitive ES) basis
              worry   (English)

Our project investigates (a) preferences for the morphological realization within the psych domain in a sample of 30 languages, and (b) the interaction between these morphological preferences and the syntactic properties of ES and EO verbs. In this talk, we will outline the project itself and present our elicitation methodology for creating a cross-linguistic psych predicate inventory as well as preliminary results regarding (a) and (b) for a subsample of languages with differently structured psych domains (see Figure 1 below).
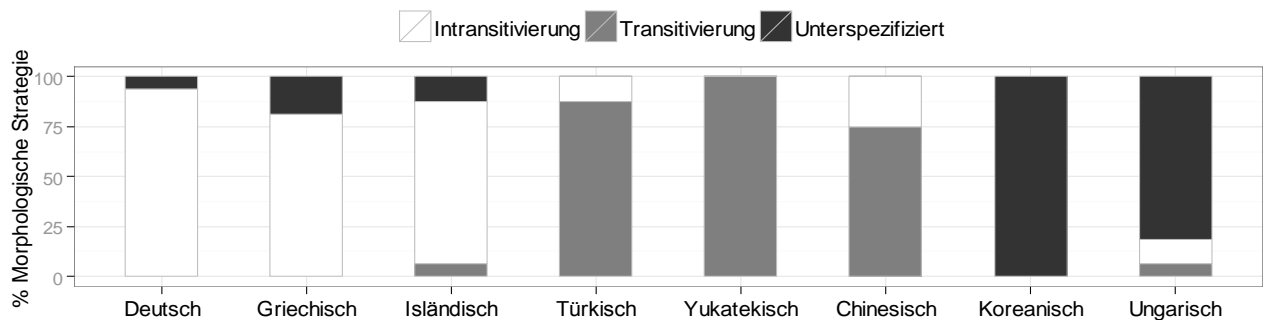
METHOD. Following the current methodology in typological studies of lexical domains (s. Nichols et al. 2004, Comrie et al. 2006, Haspelmath & Tadmor, eds. 2009, etc.), we defined conceptual subdomains on a language-independent level in order to elicit translation-equivalent psych verbs/constructions in the sample languages. We selected five basic emotion domains (HAPPINESS, SADNESS, ANGER, FEAR, DISGUST) as proposed e.g. by Johnson-Laird & Oatley 1989 (see also Ekman 1992, Turner 1999, Levinson et al. 2007, Sauter 2009). Based on semantic factors structuring each domain and *Universal Antecedent Events* (see e.g. Ekman 1999), we devised a questionnaire which can be used to elicit lexicalizations for various experiential contexts. Predicates qualify for our purposes given that they fulfill the following two criteria: (i) availability of a transitive-intransitive alternation whereby both experiencer and stimulus are arguments in both alternations; (ii) if there are more than six pertinent lexicalizations, pairs are selected on the basis of *frequency* (in an established corpus) and the *intuition* of being common in use.

RESULTS. We know that the lexicalization of experiential concepts may vary within a language, nevertheless the languages in Figure 1 show clear preferences for a specific strategy: (a) intransitivizing: German, Greek, Icelandic, (b) transitivizing: Turkish, Yucatec Maya, Chinese; (c) underspecified base: Korean, Hungarian. The distribution in Figure 1 does not represent a continuum of frequencies but rather indicates that languages tend to use a

dominant strategy in the morphological structure of their verbal inventory in the psych domain. As concerns research question (b) introduced above, it turns out that the intransitivizing languages, i.e. those languages that possess basic transitive EO verbs show non-canonical syntax with the latter class of verbs concerning word order, passivization, binding, etc. (see Landau 2010, Verhoeven 2010, 2014). In contrast, the transitivized (causativized) EO verbs of Turkish, Yucatec Maya, Chinese, and Korean behave identical to canonical transitive verbs, i.e. they do not show a peculiar syntax with respect to the experiencer object. This correlation seems to be functionally motivated given that the basic intransitive verb in these languages encodes a syntactically prominent experiencer while with the causativized alternate the stimulus is a causing actor and the experiencer an undergoer of a caused change (Pesetsky 1995). The analysis of further languages will show whether this generalization will hold in a broader and genetically more diverse sample. Also, we will gain evidence on the hypothesis that intransitivization and the property of non-canonicity of the transitive EO verbs is an areal or genetic property of Indoeuropean languages (as Nichols et al. 2004 hypothesize for the detransitivization of canonical verbs in European languages).

FIGURES

Figure 1. Morphological processes in the formation of ES/EO verbs

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