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Towards a Typology of Manner Encoding

Thursday Januari 16

Setting up a typology of the linguistic encoding of manner expressions confronts the researcher with a multitude of problems, to wit:

- a) conceptual problems: how do we define the concept of ‘manner’ in such a way that it is cross-linguistically applicable? Is such a definition possible anyway?
- b) demarcation problems: is there a principled way in which ‘manner predication’ can be distinguished from other categories of predication over events, such as ‘degree’?
- c) domain problems: is it possible to draw a clear line between manner predication and other forms of secondary predication, such as ‘depictives” and ‘resultatives’ in every language?
- d) problems of levels of encoding. It appears that manner can be encoded at various levels of linguistic structure, that is, lexical, morphological, or syntactic. Do we have to include all of this level variation in our typology of manner encoding?
- d) problems of internal variation. As it turns out, in quite a few – and possibly even all – languages there is more than one strategy to encode the category of manner. Why should this be so, and, moreover, does it make sense to declare one of these strategies as the ‘primary’ form of manner encoding for the language in question?
- e) problems of cross-linguistic variation. Even when we define the domain of inquiry in a severely restricted fashion, there turns out to be a rather bewildering variety in the ways in which manner expressions are formally encoded across languages.

Given this situation, it will be clear that my proposed typology will be provisional. Nonetheless, I will suggest that there are at least a couple of typological parameters that seem to restrict the options in manner encoding for a given language. Among these parameters particular importance seems to lie in the settings on the Nouny/Verby Parameter (which has to do with the cross-linguistic encoding of ‘adjectives’) and the Balancing/Deranking Parameter (which has to do with the cross-linguistic encoding of temporal sequences). The interaction of these two parameters serves as the basis upon which the form(s) of manner encoding in a given language can, to some degree, be predicted.