Genders and classifiers in the perspective of dynamic functional typology

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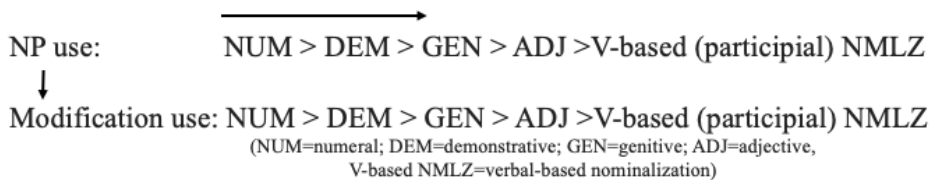
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Whereas language typology is generally known as an ahistorical classification of the world's languages, works such as Greenberg's (1995) "The diachronic typological approach to language" have argued for diachronically oriented typological studies. This presentation demonstrates that dynamicization of functional typology is also useful in understanding crosslinguistic patterns of gender/classifier marking, which, we contend, have been mishandled by leading researchers in the field. In particular, there are numerous gender/classifier constructions that do not accommodate a head noun with a referent functioning as a gender-agreement controller (Corbett 1991) or for a classifier to categorize (Greenberg 1974, Allen 1977, Aikhenvald 2019). Besides this major methodological flaw in taking the modification use of gender/CLF marked forms (e.g., Sp. [*una*] *casa* 'one.F house', Mandarin [*yī zhǐ*] *gǒu* 'one CLF dog') as a starting point of analysis, the past and current studies remain descriptive at best, failing to offer a THEORY that would tell us how gender/CLF marking is distributed within and across languages and about the ways in which those marking patterns emerge over time.

   We advance the novel claim that grammatical genders and classifiers nominalize numerals, demonstratives, and other structures and at the same time classify what THEY THEMSELVES denote according to the gender/classifier classes of the language; e. g., "**one**-F(thing)" for [*una*], "**one**-ANIMAL (thing)" for [*yī zhǐ*], "**this**-M/F/N (thing)", "**his**-M/F/N (thing)", "**two**-HUMANs", "**this**-ROUND (thing)", "**his**-FLAT (thing)", "**long**-M/ROUND (thing)", "F/ROUND-(one) **that I bought yesterday**". In other words, genders and classifiers are specifically classifying types of nominalizations, while ordinary nominalizations classify minimally, if at all.

   We demonstrate that the following structural hierarchy, coupled with the vertically arranged use/functional correlates, provides a fine-grained comparative framework equipped with powers for both constraining the synchronic distribution patterns and predicting historical developments of gender/CLF marking across dialects/languages.

INNOVATION AND SPREAD OF GENDER/CLF MARKING

NP use: NUM > DEM > GEN > ADJ >V-based (participial) NMLZ

Modification use: NUM > DEM > GEN > ADJ >V-based (participial) NMLZ
(NUM=numeral; DEM=demonstrative; GEN=genitive; ADJ=adjective,
V-based NMLZ=verbal-based nominalization)

The proposed hierarchy and the suggested patterns of development largely reflect Shibatani and Shigeno's (2013) claim that an innovation of nominalization marking starts out in the NP-use context of N-based nominalizations, which subsequently spreads to V-based nominalizations and to the modification domain. Functional motivations for an innovation and its spread are sought in the two antinomic forces of the hearer's economy favoring form diversity reflecting the difference in use/function, on the one hand, and the speaker's economy, on the other hand, driving toward form uniformity across the structural dimension and the use domains.