

Berner Zirkel für Sprachwissenschaft

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Philosophisch-historische Fakultät

Departement für Sprach- und
Literaturwissenschaften I

Institut für Sprachwissenschaft

‘Hierarchical’ and non-hierarchical verb indexation: Innovative SAP:O and 1:O markers in Tibeto-Burman

Linda Konnerth, University of Oregon

Abstract

Tibeto-Burman languages are known for displaying ‘hierarchical’ indexation, in particular in Kiranti and in rGyalrongic (Ebert 1991; Jacques 2010, 2012; Jacques and Antonov 2014, *inter alia*). The hierarchy is intended to explain the fact that first or second person speech-act participant (SAP) arguments are indexed preferentially over third person arguments on the verb. Additionally, a further SAP-internal hierarchy of first over second or second over first person has often been proposed. However, recent research criticizes the idea of a ‘hierarchy’, in particular with respect to SAP-internal rankings, which may vary not only across languages but even within the same language. New data from the South-Central (or Kuki-Chin) branch add to the body of ‘hierarchical’ indexation systems with conflicting evidence for the supposed hierarchy. In addition, it becomes clear that two indexation patterns other than the ‘standard’ inverse deserve special attention: innovative markers of first person O arguments (1:O) or of speech-act participant O arguments (SAP:O). As for the latter pattern, SAP:O markers are generally considered a type of inverse marker and have thus been discussed in conjunction with ‘hierarchical indexation’. 1:O markers, however, have not figured in the debate and cannot easily be accommodated by any of the standard versions of the hierarchy. This talk shows that innovative 1:O markers and SAP:O markers are a recurrent feature of the South-Central branch. The occurrence and forms of 1:O and SAP:O markers (as well as, perhaps, ‘standard’ inverse markers, i.e., of $3 \rightarrow \text{SAP}$ plus $2 \rightarrow 1$) further suggest that we should take seriously the functional (sociopragmatic) commonalities between these indexation systems.