Morphological markedness in discourse:

A crosslinguistic corpus study

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This talk addresses the question of reflexes of morphological markedness in discourse investigating the grammatical realization of members of the causative alternation in the psych domain. Languages differ with respect to the morphological structure of their inventory of psych verbs: in line with Nichols et al.'s (2004) typology, some languages derive intransitive experiencer-subject verbs from transitive experiencer-object verbs by morpho-syntactic operations such as reflexivization (e.g. German, Spanish), or mediopassive voice (e.g. Greek, Icelandic). Other languages employ transitivizing operations of causativization, e.g. by means of causative affixes (e.g. Turkish, Japanese, Yucatec Maya). In order to test the impact of the directionality of the alternation, we carried out a comparative corpus study including German, Greek and Turkish, comparing the occurrence of the alternants in language use. Canonical causative verbs were used as baseline.

We selected 20 transitive verbs per language (10 canonical causative verbs; 10 experiencer-object verbs) and extracted a corpus of 250 sentences per verb (total = 5000 sentences per language) from written corpora (German: DeReKo, IDS-Mannheim; Greek: *HNC* from ILSP, Athens; Turkish: *TS corpus*, Mersin University). After restricting the sample to declarative main clauses, the data was annotated for four annotation categories. The dependent variables of the study are: (a) WORD ORDER, and (b) TYPE OF ALTERNATION. The fixed factors are prominence scales that are known to affect the choice of linearization and voice in discourse (Aissen 1999, Bresnan et al. 2001): (a) ANIMACY, (b) DP-type of arguments. The data is analysed using generalized linear mixed models. In a nutshell, the results show a main difference between the verb groups: while the canonical causative verbs are in line with the frequency expectations following from morphological markedness (Haspelmath et al. 2014), this does not hold for the psych alternation. Independently of morphological directionality both alternants are similar in frequency.

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