

TYPOLOGY AND DIALECTOLOGY[1]

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In this paper it will be shown how typology can successfully be implemented in the study of dialect syntax. The systematic inclusion of patterns of variation found across the regional varieties of a language may contribute to typological theory and help refine typological parameters. Ultimately, both typology and dialectology are bound to profit from a typological approach to the study of dialects.

Keywords: accessibility hierarchy, dialect syntax, English dialects, negation, pronouns, pronoun exchange, pronoun retention, relative clauses, typology.

0. INTRODUCTION

This is a programmatic talk. It wants to invite collaboration on an area of comparative linguistics which has been strongly neglected both by dialectologists and typologists: the comparative study of dialect syntax. In tackling this area I consider functional typology as the senior partner, i.e. as the major source of inspiration and the provider of methods, relevant questions and promising explanations for the observable variation. In the course of the last two decades typological methods and typological thinking have opened up new perspectives both for historical linguistics (notably by putting grammaticalization on the agenda) and for contrastive linguistics (Hawkins, 1986, 1992). In a similar way the typological approach to the study of dialect syntax will add a fascinating new dimension to dialect research. Thereby we would come close to the ideal of a unified approach to the study of variation in language, be it historical, cross-linguistic or language-internal.

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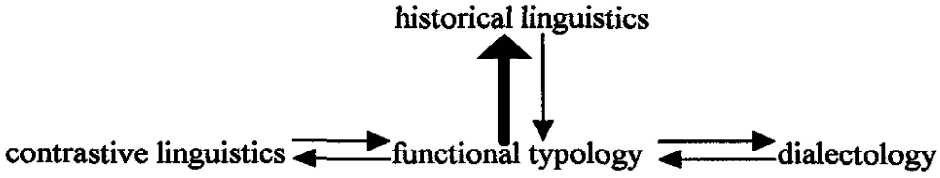

Fig. 1. Towards a unified account of linguistic variation

1. DIALECTS IN TYPOLOGY

So far dialects have been included in typological accounts only sporadically and, if so, unsystematically. Modern typology is largely oriented towards the standard variety of a language, often by sheer necessity. For many languages there are simply no reliable data for non-standard varieties available. However, the main problem with considering only standard varieties is this: Especially in languages with a long literary tradition (like most European languages) the setting of norms plays and played a great role so that certain features of the standard variety may not be the result of natural language change, of natural solutions of linguistic problems, but rather of more or less arbitrary changes forced on the language by prescriptivists (cf. Stein (forthcoming) for some general principles on which their language criticism was based). Whether as a result of prescriptivist-induced changes or for some other reason, the standard variety may give us a false picture concerning what a given language is like in a particular domain of its grammar and may lead us astray when we try to find (natural) explanations for its behaviour. This is exactly the situation in English. The grammar of Standard British English, in particular, behaves strikingly different from most other varieties in a number of respects. Just think of the absence of double negation, the missing personal pronoun for the second person plural, or the strict division of tasks between the Simple Past and the Present Perfect. Therefore a systematic investigation of several dialects of the language in addition to the standard variety may lead the typologist back on the right track. The ultimate hypothesis to be tested would be that dialects represent more consistent language types than the standard variety. There are two other advantages the study of dialectal variation may offer to typologists. First of all, it may help them refine typological parameters, possibly even detect variation not observed elsewhere.[2] Secondly, a closer look at the syntax of dialects would be also profitable from the point of view of diachronic typology. If we want to learn more about language history via the variation in language synchrony, then the inclusion of dialects is bound to offer additional insights, apart from the fact that dialects often "continue an old, preliterate usage" (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 577).

But typologists can hardly be blamed for their neglect of dialect syntax if even dialectologists have so far largely avoided the study of syntax.

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[2] This is also acknowledged in recent generativist studies on language universals and parameters in syntactic variation: "Comparative work on the syntax of a large number of closely related languages can be thought of as a new research tool, one that is capable of providing results of an unusually fine-grained and particularly solid character" (Kayne, 1996: xii). In general, it must be noted that generativists were quicker to discern the fascinating perspectives offered by the analysis of variation in dialect syntax than typologists.

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2. DIALECT SYNTAX IN DIALECTOLOGY

What do we spontaneously associate with dialectology? The study of phonological patterns (accents) and the distribution of individual lexical items, typically resulting in the drawing of isoglosses and dialect maps. If we do not immediately think of the study of syntactic variation, we are not being unfair. With regard to its focal research areas dialectology at the end of the 20th century is not very much different from what it was like in the 19th century. Up to the 1980s syntax played almost no role in dialect research, and even since then remarkably few studies on variation in dialect grammar have been published.[3] Most of these studies are confined to a single grammatical phenomenon in one dialect. Virtually non-existent are comparative studies of a certain phenomenon in a representative selection of dialects, for instance in the dialects of England, Scotland and Ireland. A second problem with the existing studies of dialect syntax is the following: Except for those studies conducted from a generative point of view (as in Benincá, 1989; Abraham and Bayer, 1993; Black and Motapanyane, 1996), they lack a perspective which goes beyond the traditional concerns of dialectologists (and I am not talking about social dialectology here). What are these concerns: (a) the standard variety of the language and (b) the history of the language. These two are the typical standards of comparison for dialect features. What is necessary in order to trigger innovative studies in dialectology is a more general framework in which it can be embedded, a new reference frame from which dialectology can draw inspiration. Typology can serve as this reference frame. Modern typological research has identified patterns and limits of variation in many domains of grammar, has presented its results in terms of implicational universals and hierarchies, and has offered far-reaching explanations. In other words, a large body of insights in and hypotheses on language and language variation has been established that the facts from dialects can be judged against. Typological thinking will be an effective antidote to the traditional preoccupation of the dialectologist with the standard variety or earlier stages of a language as the standards of comparison for their observations. Moreover, the methodological and terminological toolkit which typology has developed for comparative language research can easily be applied to the study of dialects.

3. THREE CASE STUDIES

In the following I will take a cursory look at three domains of grammar out of many in which English dialects deviate in interesting ways from Standard English. These domains are relative clauses, personal pronouns, and negation. The cross-dialectal variation we can observe in these three domains will be of interest to the typologist for one or more of the following reasons. (A) The relevant patterns of variation have, if at all, only been observed in other languages, sometimes only in languages outside Europe. (B) They conform to typological hierarchies and follow their predictions where Standard English does not. (C): They suggest explanations which may also account for similar phenomena in other languages. Taken together, the analysis of these areas of variation gives us an idea of the fruitful symbiosis of typology and dialectology.

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[3] For English compare especially Trudgill and Chambers (1991), Milroy and Milroy (1993), and Cheshire and Stein (forthcoming); for syntactic variation in the dialects of other languages compare Benincá (1989), Abraham and Bayer (1993), and Black and Motapanyane (1996). All of the latter three publications work in a generative framework (Principles and Parameters Theory, Minimalist Theory).

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3.1 Relative clauses

Let us first look at (restrictive) relative clauses, more exactly at two relativization strategies in English dialects that are not found in the standard variety. My point with regard to these two strategies is that they confirm and follow the predictions of Keenan and Comrie's Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (short: AH; see (1)). The first strategy is zero-relativization (or: gapping). In Standard English this strategy is possible for all positions on the AH but two: the subject position and the genitive position (see 2a and e):

(1) *Accessibility Hierarchy*
subject > direct object > indirect object > oblique > genitive > object of comparison

(2) a. *The man _____ called me was our neighbour. (subject)
b. The man I called _____ was our neighbour. (direct object)
c. The man I gave the money _____ was our neighbour. (indirect object)
d. The man I threw the money at ___ was our neighbour. (major oblique case NP)
e. *The man _____ money I stole was our neighbour. (genitive/possessor NP)
f. ?The man I was larger than _____ was our neighbour. (object of comparison)

I just want to focus on the subject position. According to the AH, if a language can relativize any NP position further down on the hierarchy, it can relativize all positions higher up, i.e. to the left, of it. Also it is one of the three basic constraints on the AH (at least it was in the original 1977 version) that any relative-clause forming strategy must apply to a continuous segment of the hierarchy. These two points were also formulated for relativization by gapping. "Thus NP_{rel} is most likely to be gapped if it is the subject of S_{rel}, next most likely if it is the direct object, etc." (Keenan, 1985: 154). Evidently, this is not the case in standard English. The AH predictions are fully confirmed, however, if we look at various regional varieties of English, where the zero option is widespread for the subject position, too:[4]

(3) a. That's about the only fighting ____ takes place. (Farnworth, SE Lancs.)
b. He had a nephew ____ had a big confectioner's shop. (Farnworth, SE Lancs.)
c. I had a witch ____ disappeared down a trap. (ScE)
d. I have a friend ____ lives over there. (IrE)
e. It ain't the best ones ____ finish first. (Southeast)

Secondly, pronoun retention: This relativization strategy can be found in many languages, but not in Standard English. In fact, as Keenan has pointed out (in Keenan and Comrie, 1977: 92), relative clauses retaining a pronoun in the relativized position are in closer alignment with the logical structure of the relative clause than relative clauses as we know them from Standard

[4] This is also increasingly found in highly informal English, especially in existential and cleft sentences like *There's a table stands in the corner* and *It's Simon did it* (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 1250; cf. also Bauer, 1994: 77f.). Keenan (1985: 154) mentions that in older forms of English even possessors could be found to be relativized by gapping, as in *the village that I walked down the main street* ..... It needs to be explored whether there are dialects where this option is still found. Ihalainen (1987) mentions one example from West Somerset: *Would those men I shouts out their names step forward*? Among their examples of constructions "characteristic of conversational English", primarily Newzealand and Australian English, Pawley and Syder (1983: 554) list the following one, which comes close to a relativized possessive: *I'm not gonna use words I don't know what they mean*. In such varieties we may even get the situation that zero-relativization is possible for all positions on the AH.

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English, which does not make use of so-called *resumptive pronouns*.[5] However, most varieties of spoken English exhibit this feature. It looks as if positions at the lower end of the AH, like the genitive and the oblique NP, are particularly prone to be relativized with the help of the pronoun-retention strategy. This would be in full accordance with Keenan and Comrie's prediction "that, as we descend the AH, languages will exhibit a greater tendency to use pronoun-retaining RC-forming strategies." (ibid.; cf. also Keenan, 1985: 148).[6] Pronoun retention for oblique NPs is illustrated in (4).

(4) a. You know the spikes that you stick in the ground and throw rings over them. (ScE)
b. They sent it to my old address which I hadn't stayed there for several years. (ScE)

The examples in (5) and (6) illustrate pronoun retention for the relativization of the genitive NP. Instead of a relative pronoun like Standard English *whose*, an analytic construction is used in (5), namely a relative marker or standard subordinator (*as*, *what*, *that*) followed by a possessive pronoun. In (6), which is taken from Irish English, the resumptive pronoun by itself seems to do the job of relativizing the genitive NP:

(5) a. That's the chap as his (= whose) uncle were drowned last week. (Farnworth)
b. That's the chap what his (= whose) uncle was drowned last week. (Essex)
c. Remember the man that his/that's house got burnt down. (IrE)

(6) This woman next door [**her** man didn't get paid till Friday] she'd a come in to see me. (IrE)

In some varieties, the analytic pronoun-retention strategy can be observed for a continuous stretch of NP positions on the AH, namely from the genitive position all the way up to the subject. Irish English is a case in point, as can be seen from the examples in (7):

(7) a. Remember the man that's house got burnt down. (a-d: all IrE)
b. Some fella that the graveyard was on his land.
c. I thought they would a put a steel door on that they couldn't have opened it.
d. I'd say a lot of things that they're not right either.

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[5] In this respect, we find the same difference between Standard German, on the one hand, and regional and non-standard varieties of German, on the other hand.

[6] When discussing the pronoun retention strategy in the world's languages, Comrie (1989: 140f., 163) also mentions the following possibility in English varieties (unfortunately without specifying in which varieties exactly): *This is the road which I don't know where it leads* instead of *I don't know where the road leads*. Here the subject of an embedded (object) clause is relativized. What needs to be explored is whether, in general, dialects allow a higher degree of embedding of relativized NPs as the standard varieties do. This is suggested by Pawley and Syder (1983: 564) with regard to conversational Newzealand and Australian English, giving as another example the following: *He had some songs there which he wanted to find out what they were about.*

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3.2 Personal pronouns

Besides variation in the tense and aspect systems, variation in the pronominal systems is the best explored area in English dialect syntax. Of the many interesting observations one could make here I will pick out only two. Both have to do with with the choice of personal pronouns. The first of these is discussed under the heading of *pronoun exchange*. This means that subject pronouns are used in object position (8a-c), and object pronouns in subject position (8d-f):

(8) a. John saw they. (a-d: all Somerset)
b. Bill gave it to she.
c. You got to take he right out of your herd.
d. Her do live by the pub, don' er?
e. Her and her friend were looking at a programme. (Tyneside)
f. One day him and his dad made a hot air balloon. (Tyneside)

The use of subject pronouns in object position (8a-c) can be observed in several dialects across England (e.g. Tyneside, Cockney, traditional Essex and East Anglian dialects).[7] However, only in the dialect of Somerset, a traditional dialect in the southwest of England, do we find both types of exchange, although the other type of exchange, i.e. the use of object pronouns in subject position (8d-f), underlies stricter constraints (cf. Ihalainen, 1991). What exactly determines pronoun exchange is not clear yet. However, part of the key to this phenomenon seems to be emphasis, which is why Howe (1996: 176) calls this phenomenon "*Functional reinterpretation* of the subjective and objective forms *according to accent.*" Where personal pronouns are phonologically or syntactically highlighted, the nominative form is chosen in object position and the case-marked form in subject position, as in (9):

(9) a. I'll give the shovel to YOU, not to HE. (Somerset)
b. Give it to HE, not THEY - her don't need it. (Essex)
c. HIM and HER are the ones you should pick. (Southeast)
d. Them what you like should come. (Southeast)

From a typological perspective, pronoun exchange in dialects of English contradicts the prototypical case-marking of subjects and objects in 'accusative' languages and therefore supports what we know from cross-linguistic studies: "... case marking is the most highly variable grammatical phenomenon associated with the grammatical relations of 'subject' and 'object'." (Croft, 1990: 152). What needs to be explored is whether other languages, too,

[7] In Milroy and Milroy (1993): Edwards (1993: 13) on Southeastern dialects (notably Cockney); Beal (1993: 16) on Tyneside and Northumberland; Ihalainen (1991) on Somerset; Trudgill (1990: 90f.) on traditional Essex dialects; cf. also Wales (1996: 89-91).

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exhibit pronoun exchange and to what extent it correlates with emphasis.[8] The inclusion of emphasis as a relevant conditioning factor also points to the significance of including structures of spoken language. This leads to another advantage of including dialects in typological studies. The standard variety of a language typically has an orientation towards the written mode. The development of the English standard, for example, can be characterized in terms of purging the language of any oral(-sounding) structure and structures carrying an emotive meaning, like the so-called ethical dative (cf. Pawley and Syder, 1983; Stein, forthcoming).

In the Somerset dialect, we find an even more striking feature related to personal pronouns. As we all know, English is not a language with grammatical gender. It rather identifies natural gender with the help of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns. We'll be concerned with the anaphoric use of personal pronouns for the purpose of gender-marking. In Standard English *he* is used for males, *she* for females and *it* for inanimates or animals. The gender system we encounter in the Somerset dialect, however, is primarily sensitive to the mass/noun distinction and only secondarily to the animate/inanimate and human/nonhuman distinction (cf. (10)). *It* is only used for mass nouns. Count nouns take either *he* or *she*: *she* is used if the count noun refers to a female human, and *he* is used for count nouns either referring to male humans or to nonhuman entities. Thus we get a contrast as in (11a and b):

(10) *it*: only for mass nouns
he: only for count nouns if they are (a) male humans or (b) nonhumans
she: only for count nouns if they are female humans

(11) a. Pass the bread - it's over there.
b. Pass the loaf - he's over there.

Note that this system is different from the so-called metaphorical gender which can sometimes be encountered in standard English (e.g. *the ship - she, the mountain - he*). Note also that this system was exported from the southwest of England to Newfoundland (Canada), where it has grown even more complex (cf. Paddock, 1991: 32-35). In the Newfoundland vernacular there is no difference with regard to *it* being used for mass nouns; but for count nouns an additional mobile/immobile distinction is relevant for the choice between *he* and *she*. *He* is used for male

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[8] To my knowledge, pronoun exchange as described for the Somerset dialect is not mentioned in the typological literature. The closest scenario I could find are languages like Turkish or Persian where the direct object of a transitive verb may either be case-marked (by the accusative) or have the same form as the subject. This would correspond to the situation in (8a and c) and could possibly be extended to the situation in (8b) and (9a,b). Comrie (1989: 132-136) suggests that in Turkish and Persian case-marking of objects correlates with definiteness and, more generally, with the fact "that the reference of the noun phrase in question is important, relevant for the discourse as a whole" (1989: 135). This account can be reconciled with what we have said about emphasis. Contrastive stress, for example, presupposes at least one referent that can be identified from the previous discourse and contrasts this referent with another referent which is clearly of great relevance to the discourse as a whole. The explanation offered by Comrie may thus be applied to examples (9a and b); possibly it can be extended to the example of an object pronoun in subject function in (9c). In general, however, Comrie's account is difficult to judge for English since the phenomenon of reverse case-marking of subject and object can only be observed for personal pronouns, which by definition (unless used deictically) refer back to an entity which has been introduced in the previous discourse.

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animates and immobile inanimates, and *she* for female animates and mobile inanimates. But be this as it may, what is interesting from a typological perspective is — and here I am grateful for Greville Corbett's confirmation (personal communication) — that a semantic gender system which is primarily conditioned by the mass/count distinction is extremely unusual and has not been described for a European language so far.

3.3 Negation

The major point I would like to make with regard to negation in English dialects is the following. The observable patterns in the dialects conform to the dominant types and trends as they were found, for example, in the European languages, whereas Standard English is the odd one out in several respects. Double or multiple negation is one respect in which non-standard varieties of English follow a frequent pattern in the European and the world's languages.[9] In Europe only the standard varieties of the Germanic languages are what Bernini and Ramat (1996: 186f.) call *NI languages*, i.e. languages which do not allow sentence negation to cooccur with negative quantifiers. Less well-known is the following: Obligatory auxiliaries like *don't/doesn't/didn't* in Standard English are an absolute exception in Europe.[10] Apart from English, only Finnic languages exhibit a similar feature, namely inflected negative verbs or auxiliaries literally meaning 'to not'. In these exceptional languages however (for example, in Estonian), Bernini and Ramat identify "a growing tendency to transform these verbs or negative auxiliaries into invariable NEG markers" (1996: 111). Exactly this development can be observed in many regional and non-standard varieties of English. Just think of the spreading use of *don't* as the invariable negative auxiliary for all persons in the present tense (including *he/she/it don't*),[11] and think also of the negated auxiliary *ain't*, which does service for *haven't, hasn't, (amn't,) aren't, isn't* (cf. also Bernini and Ramat, 1996: 45).[12]

Finally, I would like to discuss forms like *don't, won't, shan't* or *can't* in connection with Givón's famous evolutionary cycle from discourse via syntax, morphology, morphophonemics,

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[9] Of 42 European languages analyzed in Bernini and Ramat (1996: 182f.), 18 languages employ double negation as their only strategy of sentence negation (including, for example, all Slavic languages); in another 11 languages double negation is an optional strategy. The authors count English among the latter. This is only correct, however, if regional and non-standard varieties of English (including African American English) are included. Standard English clearly belongs to the same group as all other West Germanic languages, namely languages where double negation is not allowed.

[10] Compare also Payne (1985: 207-222) on negative verbs in the world's languages.

[11] In her Ph.D. thesis on negation in English dialects, Lieselotte Pust suggests two implicational statements concerning the distribution of *don't*: 1. Dialects which use *don't* in tag questions, also use *don't* in main clauses; 2. Dialects which use *don't* in tag questions with *he* or *she* as subject, also use *don't* in tag questions with *it* as subject.

[12] Note that a distinction needs to be drawn between negative auxiliaries and negated auxiliaries. The former have an inherent negative meaning, "the negative morpheme must be considered to form part of the derivational morphology of the verb" (Payne, 1985: 226), and they take verbal inflectional endings. A literal English translation of a Finnish sentence with a negative auxiliary would read something like 'he nots speak' (cf. Dahl, 1979: 84f.). In negated auxiliaries, on the other hand, the negative morpheme is rather an inflectional marker which is bound to an auxiliary with no inherent negative meaning. Strictly speaking, *don't* in English varieties is of course a negated auxiliary, but among the mainstream European languages it comes closest to the negative auxiliaries known from Uralic languages.

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phonology to zero. In many varieties of English the negative clitic on auxiliaries has undergone further phonological reduction, typically by eliding the plosive /t/, in a few dialects by eliding the nasal /n/ (e.g. Northwest Yorkshire, Northern Westmore). In at least one dialect of the English Midlands, southwest Staffordshire, this development has been taken even one step further, i.e. both consonants of the clitic *n't* have gone (Britton, 1992; Petyt, 1978). The only trace of the negative marker that is left is the morphophonemic change it induced in the roots of the relevant auxiliaries, for instance /woʊ/ which contrasts with the regular, non-negated form /wɪl/, or /ʃa:/ which contrasts with the regular /ʃæl/. This process can be observed for almost the whole range of negated auxiliaries in this dialect: ***baint, wasn't, haven't, hasn't, don't, didn't, shan't, can't, won't*** (cf. 12).

(12)	[bɪn]	[bɛ:ɪ]	[dɪd]	[dɛ:ɪ]
	[bɪn] [ɪz]	[ɛ:ɪ]	[dʊz] [du]	[doʊ]
	[wəz] [wɒz]	[wɔ:]	[kɒn]	[kɔ:]
	[æv] [ɑ:]	[æ:]	[ʃal] [ʃɒl]	[ʃa:l]
	[æz] [ɑ :]	[æ:]	[wɪl]	[woʊ]

I have not found this phenomenon described in typological studies of negation (Bernini and Ramat, 1996; Dahl, 1979; Kahrel and van den Berg, 1994; Payne, 1985).[13] So again there is variation at our doorstep that we need to go a long way for before we find it elsewhere.

4. CONCLUSION

At present the study of dialect syntax from a typological perspective is at its very beginnings. In order to get going what is needed, first of all, is a sufficient amount of reliable data from a wide variety of dialects because the study of syntactic phenomena takes a large amount of material. With regard to English, the collection of the necessary material is currently well under way. For this purpose the Freiburg research group has joined forces with the research centres for English dialects in Leeds, Sheffield and Helsinki. The prime aim of this research cooperation is to build up a large computer corpus with authentic dialect material from a representative sample of dialect areas. A second aim is to go back to the dialect informants with typology-style questionnaires for individual syntactic phenomena.[14] All of this needs to be done as quickly as possible. After all, dialectologists face the same problem as typologists: Their objects of research are in danger of dying out. In Freiburg we are trying to establish this research programme for the regional varieties of English. It would be ideal if the study of dialect syntax was not only a new focus of English dialectology, but also of dialectologists studying the dialects of other languages. Ultimately, this might allow us to determine the limits within which the grammars of dialects may vary and to judge the range of cross-dialectal variation against the range of cross-linguistic variation determined in typology.

It was the major aim of this talk to outline the great potential of a research programme in which typologists and dialect syntacticians collaborate in advancing our knowledge of the patterns and limits of variation in language. The more immediate advantages of this

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[13] Payne (1985: 226-228) describes a vaguely related phenomenon for Turkish and a few non-European languages, namely morphophonemic changes undergone by derivational negative affixes which are attached to verb roots.

[14] *Typology-style* means that the design of these questionnaires, of the transcriptions and interlinear morphemic translations used will follow the established format of recent typological research.

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collaboration will certainly be on the side of the junior partner, i.e. dialectology, but I am convinced that given a little time the senior partner too will surely profit from it.

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