Levels of analysis and adjectival typology

Luca Alfieri, Daniela Baldassarre, Diego Luinetti, Leonardo Montesi & Maria Simoniello
(Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi)

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It is well known that languages do not only differ in the features whereby they define their parts of speech (PoS) and in the number of PoS that they define, but also – and perhaps more importantly – in the levels of language structure at which they do so. As a confirmation, quite a few studies discussed the levels at which the noun can be defined across languages (Hopper & Thompson 1984, Mithun 2000, Lazard 1999). However, barring some notes in Thompson (1988) and Alfieri (2014), a similar approach to the study of the adjective class has never been proposed, although adjectives are missing more often than nouns across languages (see, *e.g.*, Dixon 1982, Bhat 1994, Hengeveld 1992, Beck 2002; Dixon & Aikhenvald 2004, Haspelmath 2012). The aim of the talk is to fill this gap and present a typology of the levels of language analysis at which adjectival constructions can be coded across languages.

Following Croft (2001: 66ff.), the "adjective" is defined as the most typical quality modifier construction in a language. A variety sample of 40 languages is, thus, gathered for the present talk and languages are classified on the level of language structure at which the most typical adjectival construction (*i.e.* quality modifier) is fixed.

In the sample, the quality modifier construction is fixed at six main levels. Quality modifiers can be; simple stems marked by agreement in gender (Latin) or classifier (Dyirbal), and they can share most of their properties with nouns (Latin, Dyirbal) or verbs (Lavukaleve); derived stems that are formally different from a relative clause (that is, different markers code the two functions), agreeing in gender (Rig-Vedic Sanskrit) or classifiers (Yimas); derived stems that are also a relative clause (that is, a single affix code both functions, as in the relative-participles of Tibetan languages, like Garo, Genetti 1992, 2005); a clause that differs from a derived stem (*i.e.* a relative clause or a word-sentence marked for switch-reference, as in Tuscarora); a verb stem incorporated into a noun (Chukchi); finally, a phrasal constituent that is a quality lexeme settled in the modifier slot of the phrase without overt marking (Vietnamese), as in Hengeveld's "flexible" strategy (see Rijkhoff & Van Lier 2013).

From the analysis it emerges that the simple stem (i.e. the lexicon), the derived stem, the relative-stem, the phrase and the clause represent the focal layers of the lexico-syntax continuum defined by Croft (2001: 17), and the first sketch of a cross-linguistic theory of the levels of language structure.

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