

REPORT ON THE 14TH CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY

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The 14th Conference of the Association for Linguistic Typology, commonly referred to as ALT, took place between the 15th and 17th of December 2022 at the University of Texas at Austin, in the United States. With a series of teach-ins on the 14th of December and a social gathering on the 16th of December, the conference is viewed by many attendees as a organizational and academic success. It gathered researchers from various continents and enabled both talks on a wide range of topics and also workshops on specific phenomena in language typology.

The conference provided a venue for three types of academic activities. One type of activity involved teach-ins held the day prior to the start of the actual conference, which ranged from Amazonian and Mesoamerican linguistics to an introduction to the R statistical package. The second activity involved workshops organized for the second day of the conference. I myself attended the workshop on placeholders and fillers, organized by François Rose and Brigitte Pakendorf. Although the workshop gathered data for only a few areas of the world (something unplanned by the convenors), the discussion prompted a series of questions such as whether placeholders are commonplace in isolating languages (most languages at the workshop were relatively rich in morphology) and what the origin and grammaticalization path of placeholders can be. Other workshops revolved around the typology of sign languages, constituency, and frustrativity.

The third and most diverse activity was the talks themselves, in the first and third days of the conference. The breadth of topics covered at this conference is attested by the number of abstracts in the book of abstracts, which was 335 pages long. It covers those belonging to the more often studied subdisciplines of phonological and morphosyntactic typology, to topics in more recently explored subdisciplines of semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic typology. A number of talks used the increasingly popular research method of phylogenetic analysis to explore the diachrony of languages or language families, which included the talk given by my collaborators, Jayden Macklin-Cordes and Marc Allasonnière-Tang, and myself.

Our talk, entitled 'The evolutionary dynamics of noun classes in Torricelli languages', was moderately attended and prompted valuable feedback from the audience. The main goal of our study was to test whether proto-Torricelli had noun classes at its root, and if so, in which parts of speech. A phylogenetic analysis based on a sample of data for 38% of Torricelli languages shows that proto-Torricelli is highly likely to have had noun classes, especially in nouns and verbs. One member of the audience offered to provide additional unpublished data on a few languages of the family, an offer that we gladly welcomed. Other members inquired about the biases of our sample, which was a sample of all data that was available, therefore not representative of the language family.

Finally, other people asked about the details of noun classes in Torricelli and neighboring languages (e.g. cognancy, contact, loss, etc.), something which figures among the next steps to be taken in our research project.

All talks I attended were extremely valuable for increasing my knowledge of the field of linguistics in general and of the specific areas of linguistics which interest me, as well as for establishing contact with many of the scholars whom I had previously known only through reading their articles or hearing about their work. It was agreed by all participants at the business meeting that the 14th Conference of the Association for Linguistic Typology at the University of Texas at Austin was well-organized and very well-attended by both US and international scholars, ensuring a very successful conference.