Athabaskan language studies: Essays in honor of Robert W. Young Ed. by Eloise Jelinek, Sally Midgette, Keren Rice, and Leslie Saxon (review)

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Language, Volume 74, Number 2, June 1998, pp. 441-442 (Review)

Published by Linguistic Society of America
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.1998.0166*

encies' under study—pauses, repetitions, code switching and the like—are objectively correlated with loss of specific L_1 grammatical competence. With the exception of word reordering (for which no examples are given), the author deliberately eschews 'textualist' analysis, i.e. loss of particular grammatical or phonological structures, on the grounds that these cannot be appropriately quantified. As a result, there is no demonstration that speakers who e.g. pause frequently, code switch, repeat words, speak more slowly, etc. have actually lost any grammatical competence AT ALL. 'Fluency' as used in this book is in reality a measure of rhetorical abilities such as speaking steadily without pauses or false starts rather than a gauge of actual language loss: ' "L_1 competence". . . [is] aggregate verbal planning, processing and recall ability of a speaker' (6). 'Macro-fluency' is then "the degree to which a speaker is able to carry-out [sic] these basic linguistic processes as expressed by the relative rate of hesitation and speech error frequency' (6). Given this self-fulfilling definition, the notion that L_1 competence has deteriorated in the test group is a natural conclusion; most who have studied language attrition would not fully accept this definition of linguistic competence, to the exclusion of fluent use of particular linguistic structures. Equally problematic is the claim that code switching represents language erosion, particularly since the switches observed in the author's corpus were almost entirely from English (presumably the weaker language) to Arabic (the native language); this type of lopsided code-switching more properly suggests shifting to the stronger language (in this case, L_1) in moments of linguistic stress, which contradicts the claim that increased code switching represents decreased L_1 fluency.

From a stylistic viewpoint, the text is marred by an overwhelming use of hedge words, such as 'would seem', 'perhaps', 'could be', 'intuitively', which qualify all attempts to interpret the data in terms of the speakers' life histories and cognitive strategies. At no point is a unified account of the phenomena put forward; rather, the accumulation of hedges yields an ever-changing set of speculations. Finally, the quantitative analysis (which is overburdened with an enormous number of graphs and charts) is not as robust as the author claims, since the .05 significance level used as a threshold is higher than most psychometric researchers would find comfortable; many of the age-graded charts are less than compelling.

Given the methodological shortcomings, the lack of demonstration that hesitation phenomena represent language attrition, and the contradictory results of L_1 fluency depending on which variable is chosen, this book falls short of a 'picture of the temporal dynamics of language in speech communities' (231). It is, however, highly suggestive of future study and should not be dismissed by researchers in bilingualism and language loss. [JOHN M. LIPSKI, *University of New Mexico.*]

Athabaskan language studies: Essays in honor of Robert W. Young. Ed. by ELOISE JELINEK, SALLY MIDGETTE, KEREN RICE, and LESLIE SAXON. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. Pp. xv, 490.

This volume contains sixteen essays dedicated to one of the foremost scholars of the Navajo language. Working in conjunction with William Morgan, Young has produced definitive grammars and lexicons of Navajo as well as contributing to language standardization and literacy programs, and the articles in this festschrift attest to the range of scholars who have benefitted from Young's unflagging devotion to the Navajo language. Although Young's own work did not often carry him beyond Navajo, his writings have important implications for comparative Athabaskan linguistics, as reflected in many of the contributions.

The first seven articles deal with syntax and morphology, arguably the richest and most complex component of the Athabaskan languages. KENNETH HALE and PAUL PLATERO offer 'Navajo reflections of a general theory of lexical argument structure' (1–13), based on overtly marked transitivity alternations in verbs which have both transitive and intransitive variants. The presence of a subject internal to the projection of V is tentatively implicated in the alternations. ELOISE JELINEK and MARYANN WILLIE discuss ' "Psych" verbs in Navajo' (15–34). Navajo has a few psych verbs with Experiencer subjects and a large set of psych verbs with Oblique Experiencers. The particular Navajo argument structures are related to the claimed status of Navajo as a 'pronominal argument' language.

Although Navajo sentences can consist solely of a verb, the language also exhibits a range of noun phrases, some of the ramifications of which are examined by MARGARET SPEAS and EVANGELINE PARSONS YAZZIE in 'Quantifiers and the position of noun phrases in Navajo' (35–80). Some researchers have suggested that pronominal argument languages like Navajo lack true quantificational NPs. Speas and Yazzie reject that stance, presenting evidence that all NPs in Navajo are in A-positions and therefore that Navajo is not a pronominal argument language. The lack of true quantifiers is correlated instead with properties of the agreement system.

The nature of Athabaskan nominals is also the topic of 'Direct objects in Salcha Athabaskan' by SIRI TUTTLE (101–21). Using examples from an Alaskan language, Tuttle analyzes claims that direct object

pronouns are generated in clitic position adjoined to the verb rather than as agreement markers. Incorporation theory accounts for the different superficial manifestations of the direct object (intraverbal or extraverbal).

The diachronic development of alternative direct object forms in Athabaskan languages is studied by CHAD THOMPSON in 'The history and function of the *yi-/bi-* alternation in Athabaskan' (81–100). In Navajo, for example, the alternation between these pronouns has been related to subject-object inversion or other syntactic phenomena. Thompson provides data from a number of Athabaskan languages and suggests instead a functionally-motivated explanation. LINDA UYECHI takes a different approach to the Navajo third person forms in 'The Navajo third person alternation and the pronoun incorporation analysis' (123–35) Building on work by Speas, Uyechi analyzes *bi-* as an incorporated pronoun, while *yi-* is seen as a subject marker.

MURIEL SAVILLE-TROIKE focuses on the developmental stages of the Navajo verb complex in 'Development of the inflected verb in Navajo child language' (137–92). After discussing data from several children with varying degrees of fluency in Navajo and English, Saville-Troike sketches out a multilayered acquisitional process, including the omission of arguments within the verbal complex when relevant information is provided by extraverbal lexical elements.

Northern Athabaskan historical reconstruction is the basis for two articles JAMES KARI undertakes a geolinguistic analysis of Athabaskan languages in 'Names as signs. The distribution of "stream" and "mountain" in Alaskan Athabaskan languages' (443–75). A comparison of numerous toponyms provides a glimpse into the often controversial realm of Athabaskan prehistory. JEFF LEER's 'The historical evolution of the stem syllable in Gwich'in (Kutchin/Loucheux) Athabaskan (193–234) includes discussions of tonogenesis, rhyme simplification, and palatalization. Phonology is also the object of 'Epenthesis in Navajo' by JOYCE MCDONOUGH (235–57). Making the case that [i] is the default vowel in Navajo, McDonough analyzes prefixes as having the underlying shape C, at the same time proposing a simpler structure for the Navajo verb, which relies solely on synchronic information.

Navajo verbs are often grouped according to 'classifiers', morphological markers, which ANDREJ KIBRIK analyzes as functional elements in 'Transitivity decrease in Navajo and Athabaskan. Actor-affecting propositional derivations' (259–303). Examining passive, indefinite, anticausative, and actor depersonalization constructions, the author claims that morphological markers traditionally analyzed as classifiers are reflexes of transitivity decrease. The semantics of the Navajo verb are the object of two articles. SALLY MIDGETTE studies 'Lexical aspect in Navajo: The telic property' (305–30). Midgette refines the categories of verbal aspect acknowledged for the Navajo verb, with special emphasis on the telic aspect, the notion that a verbal situation leads up to a well-defined point past which the process or action cannot continue. MARYANN WILLIE devotes her study 'On the expression of modality in Navajo' (331–47) to an overview of different Navajo modal expressions. Navajo does not have a single system for marking modality (e g. there are no modal auxiliaries), hence the task of establishing modality differences is quite challenging.

The remaining three articles deal with Navajo language planning and language politics. In 'Diné bizaad yissohígíí: The past, present, and future of Navajo literacy' (349–89), MARTHA AUSTIN-GARRISON, BERNICE CASAUS, DANIEL MCLAUGHLIN, and CLAY SLATE engage in a roundtable discussion, set in en face translation. The many contributions of Robert Young and his long-time collaborator Willie Morgan are acknowledged in WAYNE HOLM's 'On the role of "Younganmorgan" in the development of Navajo literacy' (391–405). Finally, OSWALD WERNER, MARTHA AUSTIN-GARRISON, and KENNETH BEGISHE examine Navajo philosophy and its cognitive implications in 'On the importance of "thought" in Navajo philosophy' (407–42).

Fittingly weighted in favor of the language to which Robert Young has devoted his career, *Athabaskan language studies* contains solid scholarship on the Navajo language and valuable contributions to other members of the Athabaskan family. The quality of the studies is consonant with Young's unsurpassed contributions to the Navajo language. [JOHN M. LIPSKI, *University of New Mexico.*]

Serial verbs in Saramaccan: Predication and creole genesis. By TONJES VEENSTRA. (HIL dissertations, 17.) The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics, 1996. Pp. x, 217.

This book, the author's dissertation at the University of Amsterdam, has a dual function. First, it seeks to offer a syntactic analysis of the various serial verb constructions in Saramaccan, a creole language with English and Portuguese lexical base, spoken by Maroon communities in Surinam. Second, the author claims that verb serialization in Saramaccan is not due to a West African substratal transfer but rather instantiates options available in universal grammar which arose during the process of creolization itself.

The book, which consists of seven chapters, is the result of data obtained from expatriate Saramaccan speakers in the Netherlands, and in Paramaribo, Surinam. The introductory chapter (1–10) in which the basics of the principles and parameters approach to