

first group of the classification, whereas modern Slavic languages belong to the second, it is tempting to regard this type with WH-pronoun + relativiser as a transitory one between two main classes.

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## A typologically oriented portrait of the Athabaskan language family

“It often appears as if any generalization that one draws about morphosyntax is falsified by the verb in some Athapaskan languages” (Rice 2000: 1).

### 1. Genealogical and geographical information

Na-dene (=Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit)

Tlingit

Eyak-Athabaskan

Eyak

**Athabaskan** (about 40 languages)

Northern: Slave, Chipewyan, Upper Kuskokwim and other Alaskan...

Pacific: Hupa, Tolowa...

Southern (Apachean): Navajo, Western Apache...

### 2. Why Athabaskan languages are special

- have a reputation of being very different from other North American languages

“The Nadene languages, probably the most specialized of all...” (Sapir 1929)

Greenberg 1987; Cf. Mithun 1999

- typologically exceptional in many ways

- very intricate structure: “hopeless maze of irregularities” (Young and Morgan 1972:40)
- poorly understood in typological literature due to opaque traditional descriptive terminology

### 3. Morphosyntactic features

(★ marks typologically unusual features, ★★ typologically very unusual features)

NB: Most of these features are shared by all Athabaskan languages, but some may be represented to a different degree (e.g. Navajo is most polysynthetic)

#### 3.1. Basic morphosyntactic features

- among the most morphologically complex languages of the world (syntactic structure is quite simple); just about everything that can be coded morphologically (rather than lexically or syntactically) in a human language is coded so in the Athabaskan verb
- polysynthetic expression of grammatical meanings
- consistent head-marking
- accusative alignment
- verb-final word order

(1) Navajo (Young and Morgan 1943)

gałbáhí məʔii--yéę tsé y-ee--y-ıł--n-da-dzi-s-neʔ  
 grey.rabbit coyote<sub>i</sub>--Encl rock<sub>j</sub> it<sub>j</sub>-by--he<sub>i</sub>-at--Pref-Distr-Pref-Pf-throw.SCO  
 ‘The grey rabbits threw rocks at that coyote (stoning him to death)’

#### 3.2. ★★ (Almost) exclusively prefixing

“Standard average Athabaskan” verb template

- 18 proclitic
- 17 (b) Oblique +  
(a) preverb
- 16 various derivational
- 15 reflexive Accusative pronoun
- 14 iterative
- 13 distributive

- 12 incorporate
- 11 number
- 10 Accusative pronoun
- 9 non-1/2 person Nominative pronoun
- 8 transitivity decrease
- 7 qualifier
- 6 inceptive
- 5 qualifier
- 4 conjugation
- 3 mode
- 2 1/2 person Nominative pronoun
- 1 transitivity indicator
- 0 ROOT**
- +1 (often opaque) old mode/aspect suffix
- +2 enclitic

**3.3. ★ Prefixation is combined with postpositions and verb-final word order**

(cf. Konstanz Universals Archive, universals #506, 892; in the sample of Bybee, Pagliuca, and Perkins 1990 Slave is the only genuine counterexample to the tendency that V-final entails suffixing.)

(2) Upper Kuskokwim Athabaskan (henceforth: UKA)

duł koʔ di-zi-s-do            *'I am sitting on a log'*  
 log on Pref-Md-1Sg.Nom-sit

**3.4. ★ Grammatically accusative without evidence for syntactic relations**

- Non-promotional passive
- No inter-clausal syntactic processes referring to the syntactic statuses “subject”, “direct object”...

See Kibrik 1992, 1996

**3.5. For some languages (Navajo), internal (“pronominal”) argument type**

Jelinek 1984; Van Valin 1977, Boas 1911, Duponceau 1819

- most frequently (62% cases in Navajo spoken discourse) full NPs are not there, so there is nothing to agree with
- Navajo represents privileged, as well as less privileged participants on the verb, and in that sense does not differentiate between them

(3) Navajo

y-e-i-ø-nílóóz                      *'He led it to her'*

33.Obl<sub>i</sub>-to-33.Acc<sub>k</sub>-3.Nom<sub>i</sub>-led

- different pronominal elements on the verb can cooccur with the same full NP

(4) Navajo     *'My older brother is sitting'*

a. shínaaí                      ø-sidá  
1Sg.Poss:older.brother    3.Nom-sit

b. shínaaí                      dzi-zdá  
1Sg.Poss:older.brother    4.Nom-sit

See Jelinek 1984, Willie 1991, Kibrik 1992

- more conservative Athabaskan languages are not exactly like Navajo in that respect: UKA is pronominal-internal/nominal-external

(5) UKA

a. dish    ?ilt'as                      b. y-ilt'as                      c. \*dish    y-ilt'as  
chicken he.is.frying                      it-he.is.frying                      chicken it-he.is.frying

See Saxon 1989

**3.6. ★ Poor correspondence between semantic categories and template positions**

one semantic category in more than one alternative position

nominative

one semantic category simultaneously in more than one position

transitivity

aspect — see 3.7 below

negation

multiple cases of obviously inexplicable homophony and allomorphy in grammatical morphemes

15 synchronically different *d*-morphemes in Navajo in the same part of the verb form  
 1Sg.Nom prefix is *sh-*, except in the perfective form non-detransitivized verbs it is *y-*

**3.7. ★★ Affix ordering is not governed by semantic scope/relevance**

Bybee (1985: 34-35): the most common ordering of grammatical categories:

[for prefixation]: (D) person – (C) mood – (B) tense – (A) aspect – ROOT

An example of a well behaved scope-observing language:

(6) Central Alaskan Yup'ik (Eskimo-Aleut, Mithun 1999: 407)

ROOT		DERIVATION		INFLECTION	
iter-		ngnaqe-rraar-		tur-	llru- u- q
enter-		try.to-first-		repeatedly-	Past- Indic- 3Sg
				aspect	tense mood person

*'he always wanted to enter first'*

Bybee 1985: 35: “in one language [in the sample – A.K.], Navaho, the person markers occur closer to the stem than tense markers”.

(7) Navajo

nihideestsil *'I will move on the buttocks to a point'*

DERIVATION				INFLECTION		ROOT
ni-	hi-	di-		ghi-	s-	l- tsil
<i>Term-</i>	<i>Ser-</i>	<i>Inc-</i>		<i>Prog-</i>	<i>1Sg.Nom-</i>	<i>Val- move.sitting</i>
DERASP	LEXASP	INFLASP	TENSE	PERSON	VAL	ROOT
B	A	C	C	D		

Scope/relevance ranks

See Rice 2000

**3.8. ★★ Extreme concern for expressing aspectual meanings**

(8) Navajo

-tsaad/-tsáád/-tsi?/-tsil *'move sitting'* (Young and Morgan 1987d: 628)



**3.11. ★★ Verb lexical semantics: strikingly unusual patterns of conceptualization**

**4. Towards lexical typology:**

**A case study in conceptualization of motion, or was Einstein the first to discover relativity?**

**4.1. Classificatory verbs**

(10) UKA, as well as all further examples

'I carry it' ghi-s-ROOT  
Prog-1Sg.Nom-ROOT

Rock	gun	gloves	water in a bucket	baby	...
<i>ghi-s-Úot</i>	<i>ghi-s-teŋ</i>	<i>ghi-s-[d-]laŋ</i>	<i>ghi-s-koŋ</i>	<i>ghi-[s-]ŋtaŋ</i>	...

Same roots are used for series of verbs meaning 'bring', 'give', 'wash', 'find', 'lose', etc., etc.

Classificatory verb are based on class membership of the Absolutive

**4.2. Consider 4 stereotypical meanings of classificatory verbs**

- (i) 'lie'
- (ii) 'move (intr)'/ 'fall'
- (iii) 'throw'/'drop'
- (iv) 'carry'

**4.3. Different roots for 'lie' (i) and 'move'/'fall' (ii)**

	Stiff compact (rock)	Stiff diffuse (gun)	Multiple (gloves)	Animate (baby)
(i) 'lie'	<i>-ʔo</i>	<i>-to</i>	<i>-la</i>	<i>-ta</i>
(ii) 'move' / 'fall'	<i>-nih</i>	<i>-ghet</i>	<i>-dak</i>	<i>-yo</i>

The classifications of objects are similar but not identical; there are more classes for 'move (intr)'/ 'fall' verbs; apparently the construal of movement requires more relevant distinctions than being at rest.

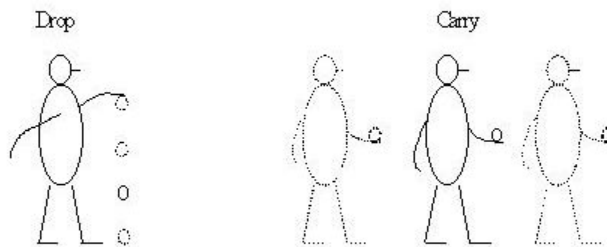
**4.4. ‘Throw’/‘drop’(iii) verbs are causatives from ‘move’/‘fall’ (ii): causative formation**

- (11) a. dichinh no-di-ghe-ø-ghil *‘the stick fell down’*  
stick down-Pref-Md-NormVal-SDO.move.Pf
- b. dichinh no-di-ghi-1-ghil *‘I dropped the stick’*  
stick down-Pref-Md-[1Sg.Nom-]Caus-SDO.move.Pf

**4.5. ‘Carry’ (iv) verbs’ roots coincide with those of the ‘lie’ (i) verbs**

- (12)a. tudzile zi-ø-tonh *‘the ice pick lies’*  
ice.pick Md-NormVal-SDO.lie.Pf
- b. tudzile di-ghi-s-ø-teł *‘I carry an ice pick’*  
ice.pickPref-Prog-1Sg.Nom-NormVal-SDO.lie.Prog

- NB: There is no increase in transitivity in the ‘carry’ verbs compared to ‘lie’ verbs
- Reason: In carrying, unlike throwing/dropping, the patient moves together with the agent. In carrying, the patient remains at rest *relative* to the agent.



**4.6. Athabaskan Einsteins**

*“The theory of relativity says that all laws of physics are the same in all inertial frames of reference. An inertial frame of reference is a frame of reference which is moving at a constant velocity relative to an observer. The observer's frame of reference is generally considered to be “at rest”, although this does not mean the same thing as Newton's absolute rest. A person making an observation about something else that*





(Collins, Petruska 1993: 52)

- Animate Absolutives have their own frame of reference and their physical movement is understood as linguistic movement as well, even when they are at rest relative to the agent
- So in the Athabaskan conceptual system relativity of motion can be overruled by animacy

## 5. Conclusion

I am exploring the hypothesis that:

- A better understanding of the system of event conceptualization, as realized in the Athabaskan verb root, can help to tackle the most intricate problems of Athabaskan grammar, such as:
  - non-scope-governed morpheme order
  - excessive aspectual marking
  - apparent irregularity and typological exceptionality
- From this one can proceed with a lexical typology of languages, i.e. a cross-linguistic comparison of conceptualization profiles in certain lexical domains

### Non-obvious abbreviations in glosses

Acc – accusative	Nom – nominative
An – animate entity	NormVal – normal valence
Dat – dative	Pf – perfective
Distr – distributive plural	Pref – prefix of irrelevant function
Encl – enclitic	Prog – progressive
Fut – future	SCO – stiff compact object
Inc – inceptive	SDO – stiff diffuse object
Indf – indefinite	TI – transitivity indicator
Md – one of mode (tense-aspect-modality) affixes	Val – valence marker

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### **The natural usage of verbal and nominal adjectives in Japanese: a quantitative analysis**

One of the typologically interesting features of the Japanese language is the coexistence of two classes of adjectives: verbal (*takai* 'high, expensive', *furui* 'old', *samui* 'cold' etc) and nominal (*kantan* 'simple', *shizuka* 'quiet' etc). Unlike the verbal adjectives (VA), nominal ones (NA) do not inflect but take a copula for predication. The question of their semantic and grammatical differences has gained growing attention in recent literature. Nevertheless there was made no attempt, to my knowledge, to investigate the natural usage of these two classes in discourse and narration. In this paper I will try to fill this lacuna.

My data consists of eight separate interviews, comprising 52958 characters of transcription of informal spoken Japanese with a total of 241 NA tokens and 297 VA tokens. The adjectives in my corpora have three essential pragmatic functions: adverbial, attributive and predicative. Following Thompson (1988) I considered adjectives, which modified a semantically empty or an anaphoric head noun in a predicative position,