The signal and the noise in the scale

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Abstract

Scalar continuity is not without exceptions. Still, these exceptions are not random, but rather show a consistent pattern, whereby the highest part of the scale, i.e. first and second person pronouns, is represented by the same structures as the lowest part of the scale, i.e. generic or inanimate nouns. This distribution, which may have either a categorical or a tendential status in languages, can be given a cognitive motivation, related to the fact that first and second person pronouns have maximally familiar referents. It is acknowledged that selective attention decreases with repeated exposures, so that very familiar patterns tend to be perceived as noise rather than as signal. While the intermediate part of the scale denotes cognitively salient referents, the extremities convey either redundant information (in the highest pole) or non-important, unattended information (in the lowest pole).

1. Introduction

The Animacy Scale, reported in (1), represents a conflation of different parameters, such as person (first/second > third), nominality (pronouns > proper names > kin terms > common nouns), animacy proper (human > animate > inanimate), and definiteness (definite > specific indefinite > non-specific indefinite), with the possibility of finer or less fine distinctions. Cf. *inter alios* Silverstein (1976); Timberlake (1977); Comrie (1981: 178ff); Mallinson & Blake (1981: 158ff); Lazard (1984); Croft (2003: 128ff); Lyons (1999: 213ff), Corbett (2000: 56ff), Dahl (2008), Malchukov (2008), etc.

(1) First/second person pronouns > third person pronouns > proper names > kin terms > human common nouns > non-human animate common nouns > inanimate, countable common nouns > mass nouns

Owing to the fact that the leftmost part of the Scale, that is, first and second person pronouns, has inherently definite and human referents, scholars usually speak of Scale of Animacy or Scale of Definiteness indifferently.

> "The first and second person pronouns are at the top of the extended hierarchy, because they are by definition human and pronominal. The first and second person pronouns are also definite by definition. In other words, there is actually a cluster of four hierarchies – person, referentiality [i.e. nominality, added], animacy and definiteness – linked together by virtue of the fact that first and second person are inherently human, pronominal and definite, and third person is inherently pronominal and definite." (Croft 2003[2]: 167)

Lazard, for example, posits a 'combined scale of definiteness and humanness', here reported in Table 1, where the numbers indicate the various positions on the Scale, and the letters indicate the 'transitions' corresponding to points critical to actance variation in languages.

Table 1: Lazard's (1984: 370) Combined Scale of definiteness and humanness

1	2	3	4	5	6
1st-2nd person pronouns	3rd person pronouns proper names	Definite Human	Indefinite Non-human	Mass	Generic
A		B	C	D	E

Independently of the different cut-off points exhibited by different constructions in different languages, no break of the continuity of the Scale is possible.

2.   Categorical exceptions of the Animacy/Definiteness Scale

2.1. Washo

The relevance of the Scale to account for so many different linguistic phenomena such as gender, number, case, agreement, word order, etc. is

well known. Recently, however, some exceptions to the Scale have been pointed out by Filimonova (2005). Filimonova discusses several points whereby the Scale can be contravened, such as likelihood of being agent or patient, economy of overt marking, and scalar continuity. As exception to the scalar continuity, in particular, Filimonova (2005: 95) mentions the case of Washo (Hokan), where only third person free pronouns may be marked for subjective or objective declension, while first/second person free pronouns on the one hand and nominal NPs on the other have no relational marking (cf. also Mallinson & Blake 1981: 63-65).

Filimonova justifies the case of Washo with the observation that pronouns, and especially first and second person pronouns, are more resistant to phonological, morphological, and syntactic change than other nominals, so that their distribution may seem synchronically idiosyncratic, and may appear as a violation of the Scale. The same explanation is also given to the case of some Neo-Indo-Aryan languages, such as Tirahi (Dardic), Parachi and Yazguljami (Iranian), and Upper Wakhi (Pamir), where first and second person pronouns have an ergative coding, unlike other nominal NPs, which follow an accusative alignment. According to the Scale as applied to split ergativity (Silverstein 1976; Dixon 1979), we would expect the reverse, that if a language applies the ergative alignment and the accusative alignment to different types of noun phrases, the accusative is found for those noun phrases that occupy the left part of the Animacy Scale, and the ergative for the noun phrases located in the right part of it. Filimonova (2005) argues that these Neo-Indo-Iranian languages are undergoing realignment from ergative to accusative, and that pronouns, more conservative than nouns, still resist to this change.

As long as it may receive a diachronic, language-internal explanation, the distribution of first and second person pronouns in Washo, as in the Neo-Indo-Iranian languages, does not really affect the status and the directionality of the Scale. At the most, it may add the remark: 'unless a morpho-syntactic change is at work'. However, the appearance of exceptions in such exotic languages, for which only a limited diachronic record exists, makes often difficult to establish whether such a change occurred or not.

2.2. Oceanic

Exceptions to scalar continuity are not limited to pronouns: in Iaai and in other Oceanic languages, for example, such violations also concerns proper names. In Iaai (Ozanne-Rivierre 1976: 134-135), incorporation is possible with generic nouns (2) and impossible with specific nouns (3), as expected, but is also found with maximally referential objects, represented by pronouns (4) and proper nouns (5). We report some examples quoted by Lazard (1984: 363-64), who conventionally uses X for subjects and Y for objects in his discussion of actance.

(2)   *A-me-xuc-bü*
         X-ASP-V-Y
         'He hunts flying foxes (with a stick; *lit*. he beats-bat).'
(3)   *A-me-kot wanakat*
         X-ASP-V K
         'He beats the child.'
(4)   *A-me-kuc-u*
         X-ASP-V-Y
         'He beats me.'
(5)   *A-me-kuc-Poou*
         X-ASP-V-Y
         'He beats Poou.'

What is problematic here is not the fact that proper names may be incorporated – this fact is rare but attested (for example, Myhill 1992: 244-252 observes that proper names may be incorporated in Indonesian, when they refer to less central characters in a story). What is problematic in Oceanic is that proper names and pronouns *can* be incorporated, while definite common nouns *cannot*. Owing to this difficulty, scholars often separate the incorporation of non-referential common nouns on the one hand (incorporation of type I) and the incorporation of proper names and pronouns on the other hand (incorporation of type II) as two separate rules, each one with a different target. But the mechanism is the same, so it seems that the same rule has two different targets, corresponding to two non-contiguous positions on the Scale.

2.3. Hungarian

Another violation to the scalar continuity appears in the more familiar domain of Hungarian conjugation. In Hungarian, the objective conjugation is used when the verb governs a definite object, such as a third person pronoun (6), a proper noun (7), a noun accompanied by the definite article *a/az* (8), by a demonstrative pronoun (9) or by a possessive suffix (10). Instead, the subjective conjugation is used when the verb is either intransitive (11) or governs an indefinite object, which may be marked by the indefinite article *egy* (12). Cf. Bárczi (1963: §33); Pontifex (1993: 160ff); Dalmi (1998); Round (2001: 23ff).

(6)   *(Én) őt váro**m***
            'I wait for him.'
(7)   *Andrást váro**m***
             'I wait for Andreas.'
(8)   *a levelet váro**m***
            'I wait for the letter.'
(9)   *azt a levelet váro**m***
            'I wait for that letter.'
(10)   *a (te) leveled váro**m***
            'I wait for your letter.'
(11)   *váro**k***
            'I am waiting.'
(12)   *(egy) levelet váro**k***
            'I wait for a letter.'

The Definiteness Scale here is contravened by the fact that, when the object is a first/second person pronoun, the verb is inflected in the subjective conjugation, as in (13). Here *-lak/-lek* is a portmanteau morpheme, where *-l* represents a second person object and *-k* represents a first person subject.

(13)   *téged várla**k***
             'I wait for you.'

Moreover, when the object pronoun is omitted, different conjugations receive different interpretations, whereby the objective form implies a third

person pronoun (14), and the subjective form implies a first/second person pronoun (15), contrarily to expectations:

(14)   *érte**m***
         'I understand (it).'
(15)   *érte**k***
         'I understand (you)' or 'I understand.'

The distribution of the Hungarian conjugation, for which a diachronic change is not evident, represents a crux for the specialists of the language. The few explanations suggested, such as Farkas (1990) and Bartos (1996), are synchronic and formal. Farkas, for example, says that the feature [definite] of pronouns referring to speech act participants is inert with respect to a syntactic rule, that is, it fails to trigger the objective conjugation in the same way as neutral vowels fail to trigger vowel harmony in phonology. This is, however, a description rather than an explanation: it does not explain why the feature [definite] is inert to the syntactic rule of the objective conjugation (an interesting discussion of Bartos 1996 is performed in Dalmi 1998). Instead, we must search for some more general principle that may account for the fact that all the exceptions go in the same direction, and that the leftmost part and the rightmost part of the Scale behave alike, differently from the intermediate region.

3.   Tendential exception of the Animacy/Definiteness Scale

3.1. Genitive word order in Ancient Greek

The picture of the interruptions to the scalar continuity becomes broader if we consider not only grammatical rules but also tendencies identifiable by frequency counts, according to the principle whereby "soft constraints mirror hard constraints" (Bresnan et al. 2001). An example can be found in Ancient Greek and in Latin, where word order is syntactically free both in the clause and in the noun phrase, and is exploited to convey an intricate range of pragmatic values. In the noun phrase domain, for example, Ancient Greek usually employs the GN order when the genitive noun denotes a specific human individual, especially if represented by a proper name involved in a kinship relationship (16), and the NG order when the genitive

is an inanimate noun with a non-referential interpretation, as in a relationship of material or content (17). Cf. Viti (2008a; 2008b).

(16)   *ho toû Kroísou paîs*
       'Croesus' son'   (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.95.1)
(17)   *tarsoùs kalámōn*
       'Mats (made out) of reeds'   (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.179.2)

The use of the prenominal position for more referential genitive seems to be motivated by the fact that the first position is particularly prominent for strategies of attention and memory (Gernsbacher 1990). This motivation, which holds true for lexical genitives, is however contravened if we also take into account pronominal genitives. First and second person stressed pronouns, and especially stressed first person pronouns, tend to follow the noun, as illustrated in Table 2. This tendency grammaticalizes in Modern Greek, where possessor pronouns regularly follow the head noun.

Table 2: First person possessives in Herodotus

Prenominal	Postnominal	TOTAL
34 (35%)	63 (65%)	97 (100%)

3.2. Genitive word order in Latin

Similarly, in Latin we usually have GN with referential genitives expressing a kinship relationship, as in the formula reported in (18), but NG with abstract inanimate nouns expressing quality, with a non-referential interpretation, as in (19). Cf. Marouzeau (1922: 133ff); Ernout & Thomas (1953: 162-163); Hofmann & Szantyr (1965: 50ff); Adams (1977: 73-83); de Groot (1957); Galdi (2002).

(18)   *L. Aimilius **L(uci) f(ilius)** imperator decrevit.*
       'L. Aemilius, Lucius' son, decided as a general.'   (*C.I.L.* I^2, 614)
(19)   *Filius aduc intrepidantis aetatis*
       'Son so far of daring life'   (*C.I.L.* III, 1898)

Pronouns are usually postposed to the head nouns, as in (20). They are preposed only under limited circumstances, as in case of contrast (Marouzeau 1922: 133ff).

(20)   ***Petitionis nostrae****, quam tibi summae curae esse scio, huius modi ratio est, quod adhuc coniectura provideri possit.*
         'The state of things **in regard to our candidature**, in which I know that you are supremely interested, is this, as far as can be conjectured.'   (Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 1.1.1)

For the third person Latin possesses two different possessive pronouns such as *suus* 'his own' and *eius* 'his', which imply coreference and non-coreference, respectively, with the clause subject (*Pastor$_i$ oves suas$_i$ curat vs. Pastor$_i$ oves eius$_{j/*i}$ curat* 'The shepherd takes care about his sheep'). These third person possessives have different word orders, as can be seen in (21). The reflexive possessive *suus* 'his own' shares the same post-nominal word order as first and second person possessives. Instead, as long as *eius* 'his' is drawn from the demonstrative stem (*is / ea / id*), and demonstratives are usually preposed to the noun (Marouzeau 1922: 149ff), the preferred position of *eius* is before the noun.

(21)   *Post **eius$_j$ mortem** nihilo minus Helvetii$_i$ id quod constituerant facere conantur, ut e **finibus suis$_i$** exeant.*
         'After his (sc. Orgetorix) death, nonetheless the Helvetii tried to do what they had decided, to exit their borders.'
                                                    (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 1.5)

Accordingly, the possessive pronouns that convey more predictable information, related to first, second, and reflexive third person, are postposed in the same way as maximally non-referential possessives represented by inanimate nouns in Latin.

4.   Behaviour of more typical definiteness markers

These categorical and tendential exceptions to the scalar continuity may be related to those cases where a definite marker, such as the definite article and the definite adjective declension, is omitted with some clearly definite

targets. The definite article is usually omitted not only – as expected – with indefinite noun phrases, with which it is incompatible, but also with typically definite noun phrases, such as demonstrative pronouns, vocatives, proper names, kin terms, and possessed nouns, with which it would be redundant. English, for example, dispenses with the article for all these cases. This is, however, not the only pattern attested, since in other languages such as Hungarian some of these noun phrases have the definite article because of their high definiteness. Haspelmath (1999) ascribes these tendencies to the two principles of economy vs. explicitness. See Table 3.

Table 3: Presence or absence of the definite marker with typically definite NPs

Language	demonstrative	kin terms	proper names	possessed NPs
English	− **ART** *this boy*	− **ART** *my son*	− **ART** *Peter is nice*	− **ART** *my garden*
Italian	− **ART** *questo ragazzo*	− **ART** (+ **ART**) *mio figlio*	− **ART** (+ **ART**) *Pietro è gentile*	+ **ART** *il mio giardino*
Albanian	− **ART** *ky djalë*	− **ART** (+**ART**) *im bir*	+ **ART** (− **ART**) *Petriti është kёndshёm*	+ **ART** *kopshti im*
Hungarian	+ **ART** *ez a fiú*	+ **ART** *a gyerekem*	+ **ART** *kedves a Péter* (colloquial)	+ **ART** *a kertem*

As Italian and Albanian illustrate, the distribution of articles is often optional, and may depend on syntactic or semantic considerations. Syntactic considerations emerge in Albanian, where possessed NPs have the definite or indefinite form according to whether the possessive pronoun precedes or follows: beside *im bir* 'my son', we may have *bir**u** im*, with the definite form of the noun. Kin terms, however, preferably select the preposed possessive, and therefore the indefinite form of the noun. In Italian, different dialects may have a different distribution of the article: the article with proper names is more widespread in Northern than in Southern dialects.

Northern dialects also have the article with masculine proper names, while Tuscan only allows the article with feminine, but only with some types of feminine. In my Tuscan dialect (province of Pisa), for example, proper names of women have the article if the referent is known to the speaker from infancy. Thus, if I say *Simona* or *la Simona*, I have two different persons in mind. In general, however, the more a noun phrase type is inherently definite, the less it shows the definite article. Haspelmath (1999) observes that, if the definite article is used with inalienable possession, it will also be used with alienable possession. It seems that cases like Hungarian, where the article is obligatory also with demonstrative pronouns, are rarer than cases where the article appears only in possessed nouns, as in the Romance languages. Articles with proper names, especially in the colloquial register, seem more common than articles with demonstratives, but less common than articles with possessed noun phrases. The article is especially rare with vocatives, and especially with second person vocatives.

The same principles underlie the alternation between definite and indefinite adjective in some Germanic, Baltic, and Slavonic languages, although in many of these languages the alternation is not vital anymore now. In Danish (cf. Allen et. al. 2002: 84ff; 96ff), the definite, weak, or long form of the adjective is found when the attributive adjective modifies a definite noun phrase, that is, a noun phrase accompanied by a definite article or demonstrative (22), a genitive or possessive pronoun (23)-(24), a vocative (25), etc.

(22)   DEF.ART/DEM: *den røde dør*   'the/that red door'
(23)   GEN: *Karens store gård*   'Karen's big farm'
(24)   POSS.PRO: *min varme jakke*   'my warm jacket'
(25)   VOC: *Kære ven!*   'Dear friend!'

Instead, the indefinite, strong, or short form of the adjective is used when the adjective has a predicative function (26) or, in the case of attributive adjectives, when the modified noun phrase is indefinite, that is, when no other word precedes ADJ + NP (27) and when the NP co-occurs with an indefinite article or indefinite pronoun (28)-(29).

(26)   PRED.ADJ: *Romanen er svær*   'The novel is difficult.'
(27)   Bare ADJ+N: *god mad*   'good food'
(28)   INDEF.ART: *en ny bil*   'a new car'

(29)   INDEF.PRO: *ikke nogen morsom fortælling* 'not an amusing story'

However, the indefinite form of the adjective is also used with some noun phrases that are evidently definite either lexically or contextually. In Danish, this can be seen in the adjective *egen* 'own', which follows the indefinite declension when placed after a genitive or possessive pronoun, as in (30)-(32).

(30)	*mors egen lille Svend*	'mummy's own little Svend.'
(31)	*Han har købt sit eget store hus*	'He has bought his own big house.'
(32)	*De har deres egne ski*	'They have their own ski.'

The use of the indefinite declension for the reflexive possessive *egen* 'his own' and of the definite declension for other third person possessives is partially consistent with the different word order between *eius* and *suus* in Latin (partially, because first and second person pronouns in Danish require the definite declension, as expected). In this case as well, in reflexivity definiteness is more inherent, and therefore more predictable to be omitted.

More frequently the omission is optional. Icelandic may use the indefinite form, beside the more regular definite form, in vocative or direct address, as in (33) (cf. Einarsson 1949: 118).

(33)	a.	*drottinn minn góður!*	'Good Lord!'
	b.	*góðir hálsar!*	'Gentlemen!'

In the Slavonic languages, the indefinite form is regularly used with adjectives in *–ov* and *–in*, as can be seen in the Serbo-Croatian example in (34). These adjectives, '*qui équivalent à un génitif*' (Meillet & Vaillant 1980: 106) and '*marquent la possession personnelle*, ib. p. 159), usually derive from proper nouns or kin terms, which represent highly definite referents.

(34)	a.	*bràtov sîn*	'brother's son'
	b.	*sèstrina kćî*	'sister's daughter'

The indefinite form may also be used when the definiteness of the referent emerges from the whole sentence or discourse, rather than from the mere

lexical meaning of the NP. In Old Church Slavonic, when we have a series of coordinated substantivized participles, the definite form is only used for the first one, as in (35). Cf. Meillet (1934: 446), Flier (1974), Lunt (2001: 142).

(35)   ***slyšę̇i*** *slovesa moja i **tvorę** ja … **slyšavyi** i ne **tvorjь***
          'He who hears my words and does them ... He who has been hearing and has not been doing.'

In the same vein, in the Baltic languages, Lithuanian resorts to the definite adjective, as expected, when the referent of the modified noun has been already introduced in the context (36), but may use the indefinite form in case of very close anaphora or repetition, underlined by a demonstrative pronoun (37). Cf. Ambrazas (1997: 144-145).

(36)   *Ant áukšto stataûs kálno pasiródė **stebuklìngas žiburỹs** […]*
         Bèt nè vienì jaû mêtai aukų̃ i͂r pasišventìmo praė̃jo,
         *ô dar nè víenas iš lìpančiųjų nepasilytė́jo **stebuklìngojo žìburio**.*
         '**A miraculous light** appeared on a high steep mountain […]
         More than a few years of casualties and utmost devotion have passed,
         but not a single climber has ever touched **the miraculous light**.'

(37)   *Taî bùvo nepàprastas **kirvùkas**.*
         ***Su tuô stebuklìngu kirvukù** i͂r pagýdė Viñcę*
         'It was not a simple axe.
         With that wonderful axe Vincė was cured.'

4.3. Relation between economy and the exceptions to the scalar continuity

The economic principle identifiable in the use of the indefinite article and of the indefinite adjective for typically definite referents is compatible with the contexts in which a violation of the scalar continuity occurs, although some differences between these cases exist.

    While economy implies that a certain marker is formally omitted or reduced because of its high frequency in a context, the exceptions to the scalar continuity do not necessarily imply reduction. These exceptions

rather represent the unexpected distribution of two patterns that may be characterized by the same length or weight (In Hungarian, we have seen the variation between the definite *–m* conjugation and the indefinite *–k* conjugation. In Ancient Greek and Latin, we have seen two different word orders). These violations do not always reflect a typical or frequent pattern. For example, the idiosyncratic behaviour of first/second person object pronouns do not derive from the fact that they are frequently in the object position in Hungarian, Washo or Oceanic. Quite differently, these pronouns represent very untypical direct objects.

The violation to the scalar continuity rather indicates the special status of first/second person pronouns on the Scale. This may be related to the fact that, even when a certain phenomenon abides by the Scale, the cut-off point usually concerns first/second person pronouns, as observed by De Lancey (1981).

5.   Cognitive motivation: noise vs. signal

A cognitive motivation may lie behind the fact that the highest part of the Scale, represented by maximally referential entities, is treated in the same way as the lowest part of the Scale, represented by minimally referential entities: in some cognitive processes, the more often a referent occurs, the *less* prominent position it has, and the less it 'deserves' to be marked.

It is acknowledged that selective attention decreases with repeated exposures, so that very familiar patterns tend to be perceived as noise rather than as signal. This occurs since infancy, so it is a very natural phenomenon. In infants already ocular movements and fixations are selective rather than random, so that specific objects of the environment can be looked at. Moreover, what is-looked at is seen with sufficient clarity that it may be distinguished from other objects, and what is seen is 'remembered', as indicated by a change in later responsiveness to the same stimuli. Fantz (1964), for example, tested visual attention in a number of infants, placed face up in a crib inside a chamber which provided a uniform background for two stimulus cards. Two cards at a time (reproducing pictures of various shape and color) were put on the children's head. One card (varied among the children) was used as a constant pattern, and was presented repeatedly, while the other card was changed at each exposure. The results indicated that each time the children's eyes were directed to the novel card. A

decreasing attention to the constant pattern was observed during the test, paralleled by an increasing attention to the novel pattern. The differential fixation times of novel and familiar patterns in later exposures indicates the importance of novelty in a broad view of 'learning' and taking consciousness of the external environment.

The increasing attention to novel patterns is part of a larger phenomenon, called 'habituation' in neurosciences (cf. Kandel 2000). Habituation is the simplest form of implicit learning, whereby an animal learns how to respond to a new stimulus. A decrease in the intensity of certain reflexes, such as the withdrawal of a limb, is observed in response to a repeated stimulus. Evidence of this can be found both in behavior and in electrophysiological studies at the neural level. Habituation is common to all forms of life, and is due to the fact that the body has the fundamental property of maintaining its equilibrium, whereby novel stimuli tend to be progressively assimilated.

According to this cognitive principle, first/second person pronouns on the highest extremity of the Scale represent the noise, while the intermediate space of the Scale denotes salient referents and represents the signal.

6.   Two competing motivations in the Scale

Unlike in cognition, in the discourse the more often a referent occurs, the *more* salient it is, and the more it 'deserves' to be marked. It is well-known that, since human discourse is human-oriented, human referents have the most prominent position in this domain, independently of whether they are encoded as nouns or pronouns. In this perspective, nouns or pronouns with a human referent follow the Scale. However, the cognitive and the discursive basis of prominence must not be confounded, as occurs for example as in the following statement of Lyons.

> "What we are dealing with is the subjective prominence or salience, in some sense, of entities in the domain of discourse. It can be argued that human referents are, in general, more salient in human perception than non-human ones; definite referents are more to the fore in our minds than indefinites because, by definition, they are familiar; the referents of pronominal noun phrases are more salient

because the very fact of their being pronominal means that the speaker takes their referents to be accessible to the hearer without even the need for description." (Lyons 1999: 215)

We have seen that noun phrases with maximally familiar referents, and especially first or second person pronouns, are definite and topical but are not salient. The competition between the discourse principle whereby importance is directly proportional to the number of occurrences and the cognitive principle whereby importance is inversely proportional to the number of occurrences is regulated by some tendencies: First, if a violation of the Scale appears, it appears in a phenomenon that is more sensitive to the parameter of definiteness than in a phenomenon that is more sensitive to the parameter of humanness. We can see this when definiteness and humanness do not match: if a phenomenon applies to definite inanimate objects more typically than to indefinite human objects, definiteness is the crucial criterion, as we have seen in the Hungarian conjugation. Instead, if a phenomenon applies to indefinite human objects more typically than to definite inanimate objects, humanness is the crucial criterion. This occurs, for example, with Hindi *–ko* and Punjabi *–nüü* which obligatorily mark human objects even though they are indefinite, while inanimate NPs may take these markers optionally, in case they are definite (Bhatia 1993: 172-173). These markers also take pronominal objects in these languages, and do not violate the Scale. Second, if a violation of the Scale involves proper names, it also involves pronouns, as we have seen in Oceanic. Third, if a violation of the Scale involves third person non-reflexive possessives, it also involves third person reflexive possessives.

7.   Conclusion

We may say that the exceptions to the scalar continuity are not random, but rather represent a quite homogeneous pattern, in which first/second person pronouns are especially involved. When the crucial factor for a linguistic phenomenon is definiteness, rather than animacy proper or humanness, the phenomenon sometimes does not apply to first/second person pronouns. As a result, these maximally definite targets will surface in the same way as minimally definite targets.

This is consistent with the omission of a definite marker with some clearly definite NPs. However, this does not necessarily imply an economic motivation, since not always a zero or shorter form is used for the extremities of the Scale, and if so this not necessarily derives from a frequent pattern. Neither there is always diachronic evidence that the highest extremity of the Scale resists to some ongoing morphosyntactic changes.

The idiosyncratic behaviour of first/second person pronouns is due to the fact that their referent is familiar and non-salient in a cognitive perspective. According to the principle whereby very familiar referents are not salient, even apparent aberrations as the Hungarian conjugation may have their own rationale. Albeit for different reasons, both redundant information in the highest part of the Scale and non-important information in the lowest part of the Scale represent the noise.

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Split Marked-S Case Systems

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Abstract
Split systems of case-marking are most prominently known from languages of the ergative-type (Dixon, 1994). However, they also occur in languages of the marked-S-type, which has shared properties with nominative-accusative as well as ergative-absolutive languages. Languages of this type appear to be the ideal test-case to compare two hypotheses trying to account for the types of splits in alignment one finds along the prominence scale by Silverstein (1976): the 'overt marking hypothesis' and the 'alignment hypothesis'.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the kinds of split alignment-systems found in languages of the rare marked-S system. In the following section (2) I will introduce this kind of alignment, which exists in two 'flavors': Marked-nominative and marked-absolutive. Afterwards some introductory remarks will be made on split-alignment systems and the interpretation of those splits in terms of prominence-scales. In sections 4 to 6 individual kinds of splits found in marked-S languages will be discussed.

2. Marked-S alignment

Syntactic typology traditionally distinguishes between nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive systems as the main types of alignment. They can be easily distinguished by how they treat the single argument of an intransitive