

Workshop proposal

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### **The study of (micro-) areal patterns in Eurasia**

The past 20-30 years have witnessed an enormous increase in interest in areal biases of basic grammatical patterns. Among others, Europe has been identified as a linguistic area which stands out if we compare the features of ‘Standard Average European’ (SAE) with their world-wide distribution, for instance, the relative pronoun strategy or HAVE-verbs and grammatical paradigms based on these (perfects, causatives); cf. Haspelmath (2001), Heine/Kuteva (2006). At the same time, the “SAE-periphery”, namely languages in Eastern Europe, often turn out to form merely part of larger clines which stretch throughout (northern) Eurasia; e.g. non-nominative experiencers, preference for non-finite predicates of independent clauses, locative comparatives, etc. On the other hand, areal clines and clusters within Europe (and adjacent parts of Asia) have been discovered which show that larger areas can be very heterogeneous internally; compare, e.g., external possessors (Haspelmath 1999; Van de Velde/Lamiroy 2017), reflexive-reciprocal polysemy (Wiemer, forthcoming: §5.3), future gram types (Wiemer/Hansen 2012: 104-112; Wiemer, forthcoming: §4). Thus, as we examine presumed linguistic areas in ever greater detail, we also increasingly discover heterogeneity within them, forcing us to refine our defining criteria.

But regardless of how fine-grained our criteria are and how we define the limits of a particular linguistic area, the true nature of this area can only be evaluated against the background of larger areas that, as it were, encircle it (Wiemer 2004). This is why attempts at defining linguistic areas usually end up with relatively arbitrary decisions about the criteria, the number of language varieties and/or the size of the area itself (Bisang 2006; Stolz 2006; Wiemer/Wächli 2012: 14-18, among others). The observation that specific properties of an area only become apparent if this area is evaluated against the background of its larger geographic and linguistic surroundings is taken up in Wiemer (forthcoming), who posits the so-called “matrěški” approach, which should also be applied in dialect geography.

In fact, the same problems in defining areas, or in determining areal clusters and clines, have also recently become apparent in studies in dialectology, in particular in dialect geography aided by dialectometrical methods based on aggregates of often heterogeneous features (e.g., Heeringa/Nerbonne 2001; Szmrecsanyi 2013). The latter can in principle be compared with methods applied in macro-areal typology (Nichols 1992; Bickel 2015). The question is whether methods of the latter domain can reasonably be applied to much smaller areas, and opinions differ considerably on this issue. While some scholars are optimistic that the methods of macro-areal typology are equally apt for discovering micro-areal clines and clusters (cf., for instance, Borin 2013: 5), others are more skeptical (cf. Dahl 2001; Wächli 2012). This is primarily because macro-areal patterns usually result from cumulative effects of polygenetic origin (i.e. at different places and times within a particular area), whereas in micro-areas, in particular in dialect continua, the “constant spread of a feature across an originally homogeneous area from a single starting point”, i.e., the wave model, seems to provide a more adequate explanation (Wächli 2012: 264f., also 235). This, however, is an empirical question which to our knowledge has rarely, if ever, been seriously put to the test.

Micro-areal studies have the advantage that they allow for more in-depth scrutiny and allow us to account for diastatic differentiation more easily, provided that adequate corpora or databases exist. Diastatic variation of linguistic features has more often than not been

neglected in typological work (such as the Eurotype-project in the 1990's), and outside of the English-speaking world dialectology has paid little, if any, attention to diastatic diversification (as for East Slavic cf. Wiemer/Seržant 2014: 15-26). Moreover, for large areas it has been emphasized that one should not only deal with spectacular cases (Wälchli 2012) and that it is a mistake to contrast the close association of diffusion and contact with genealogical affiliation, as these two sources of convergence need not contradict one another but may rather reinforce each other (Dahl 2001: 1457). These caveats are particularly appropriate when closely related languages (or varieties of one language) are studied, and here as well the goals of areal typology and dialect geography converge. That is, research into dialect variation should not stop at borders between language families, but neither should areal linguistics neglect possibilities of cross-fertilization with dialect geography, at least when dealing with diffusion, convergence and divergence on a smaller geographical scale. Moreover, larger areal clines can intersect with dialect continua of the languages (or language groups) involved (e.g., Balkan features × South Slavic, perfect > past in Central Europe).

On the basis of these considerations, we can briefly summarize the following for three larger regions in Eurasia:

- Northern Eurasia has often been the focus of studies concerning Transeurasian areal studies. However, a large part of these studies have concentrated on procedures that help to prove (or reject) hypotheses concerning the genealogical relationship of Japonic to Altaic (cf. contributions to Johanson/Robbeets (eds.) 2010; Robbeets 2015), and on studies showing the internal differentiation of Uralic, Turkic and Mongolic, particularly in terms of grammaticalization (cf. contributions to Robbeets/Cuyckens (eds.) 2013 and to Robbeets/Bisang (eds.) 2014).
- The relation of Eastern Europe to the Caucasus on the one hand and to the western part of Europe on the other, has recently been highlighted by Arkadiev (2015) in his comprehensive diachronic and areal study on verbal preverbs and prefixes and their role in the rise of aspect systems. At the micro-areal level, Authier/Maisak (2011) have demonstrated convergence phenomena in the Caucasus in the systems of tense, aspect and modality marking, while Authier (2010) shows morphological 'matter' borrowing between genetically non-related languages.
- Work on South Asia as a language area dates back at least to Bloch (1934), but only reached a larger linguistic audience with the appearance of Emeneau's (1956) seminal study on this area. Since then, an extensive literature on this topic has appeared, much of it somewhat skeptical of the idea (cf. Masica 1976 for an overview), while more recent studies tend to focus on micro-areas in the region rather than South Asia as a whole (cf., e.g., Abbi 1997; Osada 1991; Peterson 2017a on eastern-central South Asia), focusing in most cases on convergences between the different genealogical groups of the subcontinent which suggest long-term contact. More recently, however, the same methods are also being used to highlight major divisions within the language families of South Asia, suggesting large-scale language shifting at an earlier period (Peterson 2017b).

The workshop is intended to foster dialogue between specialists in particular language (sub-) families of Eurasia, areal linguistics/dialect geography, and quantitative linguistics. Regardless of their field of specialization, participants should share an interest in diachronic developments, language contact and diastatic (and diatopic) variation and should appreciate the role of language contact in structural change.

The workshop invites contributions addressing at least one area and/or language group in Eurasia which focus on one or more of the following topics:

- Which methods allow us to identify hidden or complex patterns in areas of different geographical scope (and demographic/linguistic density)? Both macro-areal and micro-

areal studies are welcome, particularly if these serve to discuss patterns that become salient when the larger geographical surrounding is taken into account.

- Can methods used in macro-areal research be applied to micro-areas and to areas with a high number of closely related varieties? This includes dialect continua, possibly intertwining with larger areal clines.
- How does seemingly free variation become meaningful (e.g., by being lexicalized, e.g., with phonetic or morphological variants)?
- Can we determine in which contact situations some language A triggers or reinforces minor patterns (in phonology, morphology and/or syntax) in another language B? More specifically, does A influence the productivity of some pattern in B and/or its status in B's grammar? Have there been chain effects between adjacent languages yielding a family resemblance of linguistic structures (including the productivity of patterns) over larger areas? How can we distinguish contact-induced features from inherited features and from the influence of general communicative and/or cognitive factors? What role is played by frequency?

Contributions on phenomena from all areas of grammar are welcome, especially those dealing with verb morphology/categories, clausal complementation and/or analyses based on feature aggregates.

Potential participants are requested to send a preliminary abstract (of up to 300 words, exclusive of references) by November 10, to the following address:

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