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REGULATIONS ON USE

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Background

The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

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6. Posture Verb Survey

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In at least some languages of the world, there is a formally distinct class of predicates which contains forms that specify postures that human beings can assume (e.g. "sit", "lie", "kneel"). The following questions have to do with lexical and grammatical patterns within the class of these types of verbs, and with the affinity of these patterns to the patterns found with other verb-types in different languages. This enquiry is thematically linked to the more general "Intransitive Predicate Form Class Survey" supplied separately, but it is also intended to be a self-contained and simpler unit on its own. Thanks for your help.

In many languages the following three kinds of "Aspect-causative" distinction can be made with respect to such verbs (Talmy 1985, p.145):

(A) STATIVE: "a body or object is in a posture non-causatively, or else an animate being self-agentively maintains its body in the posture" *Being in a position*

(B) INCHOATIVE: "a body or object comes into a posture non-causatively, or else an animate being self-agentively gets its body into the posture" *Getting into a position*

(C) AGENTIVE "an agent puts a body other than its own, or some other object, into a posture".
Putting X into a position

In your field language:

1. Are predicates which specify human postures generally characterizable as being formally alike? i.e. is there a single form-class of predicates which includes these, even if it is not restricted to them?

1a. If so, what is semantic nature of the form-class? Is it restricted to forms encoding only human postures? Does it include animal postures? inanimate object positions or shapes? Or is the class much wider in semantic scope -- in what way?

2. For the best-guess translation equivalents in your field language of "sit" "stand" and "lie" when predicated of humans:

2a. Are the predicates in question restricted to humans? What else can "sit" "stand" "lie"?

2b. How do humans "sit" "stand" and "lie" in your cultural context? Do you feel obliged to give more than one translation for one or more of the terms? Explain.

2c. Are these three predicates structurally representative of predicates which specify human postures in your language, or is there something unique about one or more of them (which ones)?

2d. Do any or all of these three forms take on a grammatical function in any way in your language? (e.g. is "sit" used as a copular verb? Does "stand" indicate a habitual contour etc.) How?

3. How, if at all, does the language use morpho-syntactic means to make the three-way distinction outlined by Talmy (1985) above?

3a. Is there a possibility of ambiguity between two of the three "aspect-causative types", or perhaps all three? cf. English "I am sitting down" which can be read either statively or inchoatively. This can be checked by reading back the elicited forms to a different informant and asking him or her to explain or illustrate to you the meaning of what you have just said.

3b. Is it possible to discern which of the three "aspect-causative types" is/are morpho-syntactically basic and which derived?

4. Do all three "aspect-causative types" take the same lexeme for a given posture, or are there multiple lexemes involved?

4a. If there is switch of lexeme(s), which "aspect-causative types" are expressed similarly and which differently from one another, with respect to lexeme?

4b. Is it possible to discern which are basic and which derived forms of the same lexeme?

5. How does the pattern of Talmyesque "aspect-causative types" articulate with the general patterning of aktionsart related predicate form-classes in your field language? See Intransitive Predicate Form Class Survey.

References

Talmy, Len. 1985. Lexicalization patterns: semantic structure in lexical forms. *Language Typology and Syntactic Description: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*. Volume 3. ed. T. Shopen, pp. 57-149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.