Extended meanings of reported speech, a crosslinguistic study

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Introduction

- A **reported speech construction**, henceforth RSC can look as (1) in English:

(1) Panu said: "Helsinki is beautiful during winter."

- **Matrix verb** 'say' in (1) embeds the speech report "Helsinki is beautiful […]" by original speaker Panu

- In some languages, the **combination** of **matrix verbs of RSC**s, **usually verbs of utterance**, and certain **embedded elements** give rise to **extended meanings** [1]; e.g. **want**, or introduce a **complement phrase** as in examples (2) – (3)

(2) Yeri (Torricelli, Papua New Guinea) **want**
a) hem **m-nobia**, "hem ta […] miakua-l."
1SG **1SG-talk.R** 1SG FUT […] frog-PL
'**I said**, "Tonight I will [go look for] frogs."' [2: 215]

b) hem **m-nobia** m-ie<Ø>ga miaga.
1SG **1SG-want.R** 1SG-eat.I<SG.F> banana.
'**I want** to eat a banana.' [2: 598]

(3) Fon, (Kwa, Benin) **complementizer**
Sìká/Kɔkú **ɖɔ ɖɔ** yé *tùn* **ɖɔ** émì fin Àsíbá sín gbɔ
Sika/Koku **say say** 3pl *know* **say** LOG steal Asiba GEN goat
'Sikai/Koku **said that** they *know* **that** she-i stole Asiba's goat.' [3: 79]

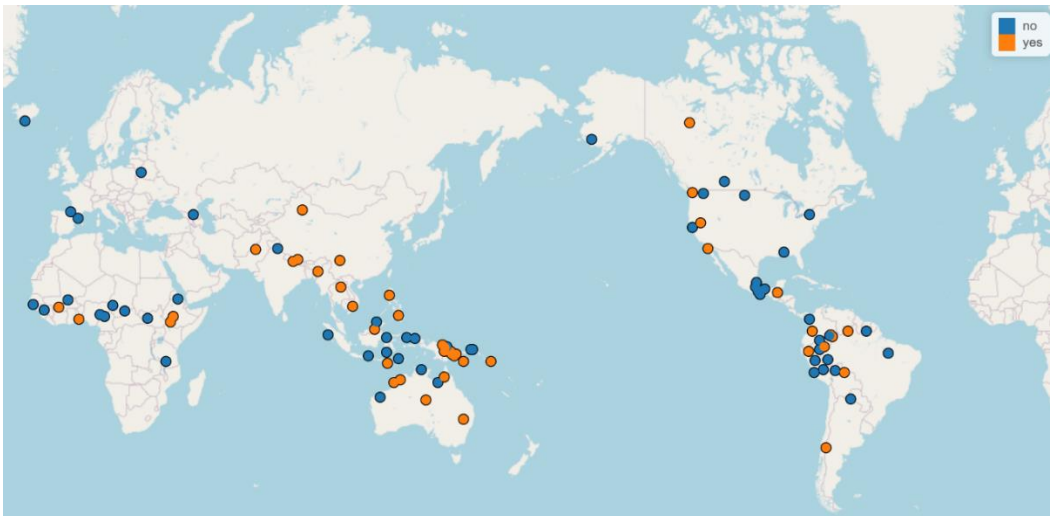

Figure 1
Map of 100 language sample showing cross-linguistic occurrence of meaning extensions of RSCs

Methods

- Analysis of meaning extensions of RSCs based on a **crosslinguistic typological variety sample of 100 languages** (Figure 1)
- The data is analysed with the **RQDA extension package in R** [3]
- RQDA allows **tagging i.e. coding of elements** and passages in the data files
- Using **RQDA allows a bottom-up process** to find and account for all meaning extensions of RSCs in the data set
- A **bottom-up analysis** of typological data **does not require pre-determined comparative categories or concepts**; the patterns emerge from the data under qualitative analysis using RQDA

Results

- **Meaning extensions** of RSCs and their matrix verbs **occur regularly** throughout the languages of the world
- **Both matrix verb and embedded elements of RSCs** give rise to **meaning extensions**
- **Meaning extensions are similar** and span from **lexical meanings** to **grammatical functions** as in examples (2) – (3)

Conclusions

- Meaning extensions are **not limited to certain geographic areas**
- **Meaning extensions are very similar** across the languages of the world and **not idiosyncratic**, **nor restricted** to a geographic area or **language family**

References

[1] Spronck, Stef, & Casartelli, Daniela (2020). By way of speaking: how reported speech may have shaped grammar [submitted]
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[3] Lefebvre, Claire, & Brousseau, Anne-Marie (2002). A grammar of Fon (Mouton Grammar Library 25). Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
[4] Huang, Ronggui (2016). RQDA: R-based Qualitative Data Analysis. R package version 0.2-8. http://rqda.r-forge.r-project.org/

For more information about the project visit: https://blogs.helsinki.fi/speech-representation/

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