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0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

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MORPHEME ORDER AND SEMANTIC SCOPE

Athapaskan languages are well known for their intricate morphology, in particular the complexity of their verbs. The significance of these languages for linguistic theory is widely acknowledged. In this book Keren Rice offers a rich typological survey of morpheme ordering in Athapaskan verbs, with implications for both synchronic grammar and language change. Arguing against a view that sees morpheme order in Athapaskan languages as templatic and essentially without principle, she shows that verb structure is in fact widely predictable across languages if appropriate syntactic factors and an overarching principle of semantic scope are taken into account. The presentation also includes a detailed study of argument and aspectual systems. This landmark volume is the first major comparative study of its type for the Athapaskan language family, combining descriptive depth with a contemporary theoretical perspective. Clear and insightful, it will be welcomed by Athapaskanists, typologists, and historical and theoretical linguists alike.

Keren Rice is professor of linguistics at the University of Toronto, where she also coordinates the university's Aboriginal Studies Program. She has previously written a grammar of Slave, an Athapaskan language of Canada. This book was awarded the Leonard Bloomfield Book Award. She has also written numerous articles and co-edited several books on Athapaskan languages and linguistics.

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Keren Rice

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KEREN RICE

University of Toronto



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Frontmatter

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0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
1 Introduction: Beginning the Journey	1
PART I. FIRST STEPS	
2 Introducing the Problem	9
2.1 The Templatic Nature of the Athapaskan Verb	9
2.2 Templatic Properties of the Verb	10
2.3 The Verb and Word Formation	15
3 Global Uniformity and Local Variability: A Possible Account	20
3.1 Two Hypotheses	20
3.2 Defining Scope	24
3.3 Theoretical Preliminaries	26
PART II. THE LEXICAL ITEMS	
4 First Stop: Introducing the Lexical Items	33
4.1 Definitions	33
4.2 Preverbs	35
4.3 Quantificational Elements	41
4.4 Incorporates	68
4.5 Other Lexical Material	71
4.6 Summary	73
5 A Brief Side Trip: The Position of the Verb Stem	74
6 Ordering of the Lexical Items	79
6.1 On the Ordering of the Lexical Items	79
6.2 Principles of Ordering	82
	vii

Cambridge University Press

0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

Contents

6.3	Ordering within the Preverbs	84
6.4	Ordering within the Quantificational Elements	101
6.5	Ordering within the Incorporates	106
6.6	Summary	107
6.7	Ordering among Constituents	107
6.8	The Other Lexical Items (Negative, Inceptive)	121
6.9	Summary	124
7	Voice/Valence	126
7.1	Background Assumptions	127
7.2	Productive Uses	128
7.3	Middles and Causatives	158
7.4	Idiosyncratic Nature	165
7.5	The Lexical Entry	168
7.6	Summary	169
8	Summary: Lexical Items	171
PART III. THE FUNCTIONAL ITEMS		
9	An Introduction to the Functional Elements	175
10	Pronominals	180
10.1	Subject Form Pronominals	180
10.2	The Status of Object Inflection	203
10.3	On Noncanonical Subjects	210
10.4	A Return to the Ordering Questions	222
10.5	Problems for Object-Subject Inflection Ordering	224
10.6	Summary: The Pronominal Inflection System	244
11	The Aspect System	246
11.1	Aspect 1: Viewpoint Aspect	246
11.2	Aspect 2: Situation Type Aspect	251
11.3	Ordering within Aspect	281
11.4	On the Role of the Suffixes	283
11.5	On the Position of the Suffixes	295
11.6	Beyond Slave	303
11.7	Ordering and Combinatorics	310
11.8	Summary	320
11.9	Appendix: A Comparative Look: Situation Aspect and Aspectually Determining Morphemes	321
12	Qualifiers and Their Ordering	324
12.1	The Qualifiers: Content	324

Cambridge University Press

0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

<i>Contents</i>	ix
12.2 The Ordering of Qualifiers	332
12.3 Summary	341
13 On the Ordering of Functional Items	342
13.1 The Ordering of Objects and Situation Aspect	342
13.2 The Ordering of First/Second Person Subjects and Aspect	346
13.3 The Ordering of Subject Number and Aspect	348
13.4 The Ordering of Subject Number and Qualifiers	350
13.5 The Ordering of Noun Class Markers	353
13.6 The Ordering of Pronouns and the Middle Voice Qualifier: Semipassives in Navajo	355
13.7 Situation Aspect and <i>d/n</i> Qualifiers in Navajo	356
13.8 A Navajo 'Floating' Qualifier	357
13.9 Interacting Systems	359
PART IV. A VIEW OF THE LEXICON	
14 The Scope Hypothesis and Simplifying the Lexicon	369
15 Evidence from the Lexicon	373
15.1 Predictions	373
15.2 Summary	383
PART V. THE END OF THE JOURNEY	
16 Looking Back, Looking Ahead	387
16.1 On the Nature of the Lexical Entry	387
16.2 On the Distinction between Inflection and Derivation	391
16.3 On the Domain of Word Formation	393
16.4 On the Role of Scope in Determining Morpheme Order	394
16.5 On Consequences for a Template Model	395
16.6 On Consequences for Historical Change	396
16.7 For the Future	398
PART VI. APPENDIXES	
1 Templates and Affix Ordering	401
1.1 The Template	401
1.2 Pan-Athapaskan Templates	404
2 The Languages	406
2.1 Language Classification	406
2.2 Why These Languages?	408

Cambridge University Press

0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x		<i>Contents</i>
3	Summary of Constraints and Language Differences	409
3.1	Ordering Principles	409
3.2	Interfaces	412
3.3	Differences Not Related to Scope	412
3.4	Idiosyncrasies	414
	<i>Notes</i>	415
	<i>References</i>	431
	<i>Name Index</i>	443
	<i>Languages Index</i>	447
	<i>Subject Index</i>	449

Cambridge University Press

0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

Whenever linguists discover that I work on Athapaskan languages, I can anticipate the first question that they will ask – however could a child come to learn the order of morphemes in the verb of one of these languages? The order of morphemes seems to be completely without rhyme or reason. Morpheme order is thus a question that is everpresent in one’s mind when studying languages of this family. I first began to tackle this problem in 1991, with work on the so-called disjunct prefixes of the Athapaskan verb. A crosslinguistic survey revealed something very striking – little variation existed across the family in terms of the ordering of these elements. I began to feel that I was on the road to an explanation of the ordering of this part of the verb, but the so-called conjunct portion of the verb still left me baffled. One day in the early 1990s Chomsky gave a talk here at the University of Toronto, and I began to get some glimmerings; at least the ordering began to look somewhat less random than it had hitherto seemed. It was after this that I decided that this was a research question that I had to pursue. The quest to come to some personal understanding of morpheme order took me several years, as there was much I had to learn in many different arenas. I still have many questions about morpheme ordering, probably at least as many as I began with, but I feel that I am on a road to understanding what makes the morpheme ordering learnable. It is this journey that I take the reader on in this book.

The thanks due in writing a book like this are especially numerous. First, thank you to the Killam Foundation for providing me with the very valued release from teaching responsibilities that gave me the time that I needed to undertake this project. I could not have done the basic research required for this book without that time. Second, thank you to the 1995 organizers of the Linguistic Institute for inviting me to teach a course in the structure of Athapaskan languages. That course too gave me the opportunity to do the

Cambridge University Press

0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

basic research for this book. Many thanks to the students and visitors in that class for their interest, enthusiasm, and support.

My greatest debt of thanks goes to Leslie Saxon. Much of the work on pronominals arises out of joint work, as does much of the discussion of the iterative in chapter 4. I have tried many ideas out on her, and she has read much of this manuscript, but she is not responsible for any misinterpretations on my part. Her support has been invaluable to me in finishing this book.

Sharon Hargus has also been of invaluable help, in both listening and helping with Babine-Witsuwit'en data. Many thanks to her for her support.

The community of Athapaskan linguists has heard many of the ideas in this book. The details and precision of the excellent work by Athapaskan linguists have allowed for the kind of research that I have done in this book; without this research to build on, this book would have been impossible. Many, many thanks to Ed Cook, Aryeh Faltz, Ted Fernald, Victor Golla, Eloise Jelinek, Dagmar Jung, Jim Kari, Andrej Kibrik, Michael Krauss, Sally Midgette, Bill Poser, Brian Potter, Chad Thompson, Siri Tuttle, MaryAnn Willie, and Bob Young. I hope that I have not forgotten anyone, and I apologize if I have. This book could not have been conceived without Jim Kari's work to build on.

Thanks are also due to many other linguists, listed here in alphabetical order, for discussion of various issues in this book: Sasha Aikenvald, Mark Baker, Susana Béjar, Joan Bybee, Elizabeth Cowper, Scott Delancey, Bob Dixon, Tom Givón, Ken Hale, Alana Johns, Diane Massam, Marianne Mithun, David Perlmutter, Betsy Ritter, Carlota Smith, Peggy Speas, Sally Thomason, Lisa Travis, and Barbara Unterbeck. None of these people are responsible for misinterpretations on my part, and I thank each one of them.

Thanks too to audiences at various colloquia and conferences where work that is part of this book was presented. These include the University of Calgary, the University of Essex, the University of Cologne, the University of Toronto, the University of Oregon, the 1997 Workshop in Challenges in Inflection and Derivation at the University of Sussex, the 1994 Conference on Configurations at the University of Québec at Montréal, and the 1997 Workshop on Voice and Valency at Australia National University, sponsored by the Centre for Research on Linguistic Typology. Many thanks to the people at the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, for their enormous hospitality when I visited for a week in April 1996.

This book could not have been done without the numerous speakers of the languages. The Slave speakers are thanked individually in Rice 1989; here I would like to again thank Lucy Ann Yakeleya for her help in recent years. See the sources for direct acknowledgment of the work of other individuals.

Cambridge University Press

0521583543 - Morpheme Order and Semantic Scope: Word Formation in the Athapaskan Verb

Keren Rice

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

xiii

I also owe a debt of thanks to the wonderful people at Cambridge University Press – Judith Ayling for encouraging me to take on this project and Steve Anderson, Christine Bartels, Beatrice Santorini, and Helen Wheeler for seeing it through.

Finally, my family, Arthur Jacobs, Rachel Jacobs, and Hannah Jacobs, have shown great forbearance with my long hours in front of the computer, my books spread out over the floor, my sometimes inability to respond appropriately when I have been otherwise preoccupied. I don't know if they really understand what this project is about, but they have demonstrated extreme patience with its long gestation.