

Current estimates are that around 3,000 of the 6,000 languages now spoken may become extinct during the next century. Some 4,000 of these existing languages have never been described, or described only inadequately. This book is a guide for linguistic fieldworkers who wish to write a description of the morphology and syntax of one of these many under-documented languages. It uses examples from many languages both well known and virtually unknown; it offers readers who work through it one possible outline for a grammatical description, with many questions designed to help them address the key topics. Appendices offer guidance on text and elicited data, and on sample reference grammars which readers might wish to consult. The product of fourteen years of teaching and research, this will be a valuable resource to anyone engaged in linguistic fieldwork.

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Describing morphosyntax
A guide for field linguists

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To Stephanie, Claire, and Doris

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Acknowledgments

xxx

ADV	adverb	I	first person
INC	agreement	1INC	first person inclusive
1PL	animate	1PL	first person plural
1SG	anterior	1SG	first person singular
2	antipassive	2	second person
2DL	applicative	2DL	second person dual
2PL	article	2PL	second person plural
2SG, 2S	aspect	2SG, 2S	second person, singular
3	associative	3	third person
3DL	advanced tongue root	3DL	third person, dual
3FSG	AUG	3FSG	third person, feminine singular
3MSG	AUX	3MSG	third person, masculine singular
3PL	benefactive	3PL	third person, plural
3POS	causative	3POS	third person, possessor
3SG, 3S	centric	3SG, 3S	third person, singular
A	classifier	A	most agent-like argument of a
	CL, CLS		multi-argument clause
ABS	case marker	ABS	absolute case
AC	connective ('and then . . .')	AC	anticausative
ACC	complete	ACC	accusative case
ACT	conditional	ACT	actor
ADJ	CONT	ADJ	adjective

The linguistic examples in this book come from a variety of sources, published, and unpublished, as well as original fieldwork. The transcription and annotation systems used vary considerably from one author to the next. I have kept abbreviations to a minimum by using glosses consistent with the following list. This has required regularization of the spellings of certain abbreviations, but not analyses. For example, the gloss “subject” is abbreviated in a number of different ways in the literature. I have reduced all of these to SUB, but I haven’t called anything a “subject” that is not called a subject by the author of the source.

Occasionally two abbreviations appear for the same gloss, e.g., I N T R N S and I N T R for “intransitive.” Conversely, sometimes one abbreviation represents two distinct concepts, e.g., S for “only argument of a single argument clause” and “sentence.” I consider these abbreviations to be so common, and their meanings so distinct, that any potential ambiguity is negligible.

Abbreviations

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LD	left-dislocation	LNK	linker
		LOC	locative
		MASC, M	masculine
		MID	middle voice
		MIR	mirative
		MKR	marker
		MOD	modifier
		MSG	masculine singular
		MVMT	movement
		N	noun
		NEG	negative
		NEU	neuter
		NF	non-finite
		NOM	nominative case, nominalizer
		NONFUT	non-future tense
		NONPERF	non-perfective aspect
		NONSPEC:I	non-specific aspect, intransitive
		NP	noun phrase
		NP ^{rel}	relativized noun phrase
		NS	non-subject
		OBJ	object
		OBL	oblique
		OBV	obviative
		OPT	optative mode
		P	least agent-like argument of a
		PART	multi-argument clause
		PASS	passive
		PAST	past tense
		PAST1	first past tense (immediate past)
		PAST3	third past tense (distant past)
		PAT	patient
		PERF	perfective aspect
		PL	plural
		PN, PRN	pronoun
		POSS	possessive
		POT	potential
		PP	prepositional phrase
		PPERF	past-perfective aspect
		PR	participant reference
		PRED	predicate
		PREF	prefix
		PRES	present tense
		PROG	progressive aspect
		PROX	proximate
		PURP	purpose
		QM	question marker
		QP	question particle
		QUAL	quality
		RECIP	reciprocal
		REDUP	reduplication
		REF	referential
		REFL	reflexive
CONTR	contrast		
COP	copula		
COR	coreference		
DAT, D	dative		
DC	deictic center		
DECL	declarative		
DEF	definite		
DEM	demonstrative		
DEP	dependent		
DERIV	derivational		
DET	determiner		
DETRANS	detransitive		
DIM	diminutive		
DIR	directional		
DISJUNCT	disjunction		
DIST	distributive		
DO	direct object		
DR	downriver		
DS	different subject		
DUR	durative		
ERG	ergative		
E	epenthetic morph		
EM, F	feminine		
EXO	exocentric		
EXIST	existential		
GEN, G	genitive		
GNO	gnomic		
HAB	habitual		
HSY	hearsay		
IMPER, IMP	imperative		
IMPERF	imperfective aspect		
INAN	inanimate		
INC	inclusive		
INCHO	inchoative		
INCOMPL	incomplete		
INCOMP	incorporation		
IND	indicative		
INDEF	indefinite		
INDIC	indicative		
INF	infinitive		
INFER	inferential mode		
INFL	inflectional		
INST	instrumental		
INTER	interrogative		
INTR,	intransitive		
INTRNS			
INV	inverse		
INVIS	invisible		
IRR	irrealis		
ITER	iterative		

xvii List of abbreviations

REL	relativizer	sw	soundword
REP	repetitive	TAM	tense, aspect, mode
S	only argument of a single-argument clause, sentence	TAM	theme
SEQ	sequence, sequential	TNS	tense
SG	singular	TOP	topic
SIM	simultaneous	TRANS,	
SM	subject marker	TRANS,	transitive
SPEC	specifier	TVF	truth-value focus
SS	same subject	UNDGOER	Undergoer
STAT	stative	UR	upriver
STD	standard	V	verb
SUB	subject	VLZR	verbalizer
SUBJ	subjunctive mode	VER	veridical mode

An asterisk (*) before an example indicates that the example is not a grammatically acceptable expression in the language. A question mark (?) before an example indicates that the example is marginally acceptable.