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68. Agreement

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1. Introduction

Agreement is still poorly understood. Changes in agreement systems are therefore of particular interest, since they may provide insights into the function of agreement as well as into more general mechanisms of language change. We shall concentrate on major changes, beginning with the way in which agreement systems arise — starting with the accepted view on the rise of verb agreement (section 2.) and giving an assessment of it

(section 3.). Then we move to the development of other types of agreement (section 4.) and the loss of agreement (section 5.). We also consider briefly finer-grained work on minor changes within agreement systems (section 6.).

2. The Rise of Verb Agreement Systems

The most influential paper concerning the rise of agreement is Givón (1976), where it is claimed that verb agreement markers develop from anaphoric pronouns. This idea was not completely new; there are various suggestive observations going back to early in the last century (see Claudi 1985, 56–7; Bresnan and Mchombo 1987, 742); work in typology also offered valuable clues. But it was Givón who presented an explicit hypothesis and based extensive claims upon it (an early sketch is found in Givón 1971, 402–3). His account

still provides a good framework for a discussion of what is known at present about the rise of agreement.

Givón claims that subject-verb agreement develops from topic-verb agreement, more specifically from topic-shifting constructions where the noun phrase which is topicalized is coreferential to one of the verb's arguments. This is shown schematically as follows; in (1) we have a shifted topic:

- (1) the man, he
 TOPIC PRONOMINAL SUBJECT
 came
 VERB

In this marked construction, the pronoun represents topic agreement. This construction may become reanalyzed as a neutral sentence type, as has occurred in many non-standard dialects of *American English*:

- (2) the man
 SUBJECT
 he-came
 AGREEMENT.MARKER-VERB

Why should this reanalysis occur? It results from the overuse of a powerful discourse device, which is a reasonable strategy, particularly if conditions for communication are difficult. Two interesting predictions follow. First, languages which use zero-anaphora in place of anaphoric pronouns will not develop corresponding verb agreement. And second, since the subject noun phrase typically has more features favouring topicalization than have other noun phrases, it is more frequently topicalized and so subject agreement is a precondition for agreement with other arguments (Moravcsik 1974, 27–8).

Givón claims that evidence for pronouns becoming subject agreement markers can be found in English and French dialects and in related pidgins and creoles. Various Bantu languages also provide confirming data, as is illustrated from *Swahili*:

- (3) kikopo ki-li-vunjika
 cup AG-PAST-break
 'the cup broke'

The subject agreement markers retain their older anaphoric function:

- (4) ki-li-vunjika
 it-PAST-break
 'It (the cup) broke'

Swahili also helps us to understand the rise of object agreement. This is not obligatory,

as shown by the fact that it does not occur in the following example:

- (5) ni-li-vunja kikopo
 I-PAST-break cup
 'I broke a cup'

The object may be topicalized, as in example (6):

- (6) kikopo, ni-li-ki-vunja
 cup, I-PAST-it-break
 'the cup, I broke it'

Here we do find the object marker *ki*. Provided the object is definite, it may in Swahili occur in its usual place after the verb and the marker *ki* may be retained (thus the verb form would be as in (6)). This represents (definite) object agreement. Various Bantu languages are at different stages in the development of object agreement.

As is implicit in the account above, Givón claims that agreement and pronominalization are 'fundamentally one and the same phenomenon'. This seems right. It is supported by the fact that most recent attempts to define agreement include within it the determination of the form of pronouns (though they may not be linked syntactically to the antecedent). And those who try to split agreement from pronominalization (anaphora) put the dividing line at different points. Moreover data on agreement options show that attributive modifiers and pronouns are linked as poles of a single hierarchy (the Agreement Hierarchy, Corbett 1979). After a review of recent work on the subject Barlow (1988, 134–52) concludes that there is no good basis for distinguishing between agreement and antecedent-anaphora relations (even when cross-sentential); see also Lehmann (1982, 237–8) on this point.

Givón's account (which is restated briefly in Givón 1984, 360–72) is intuitively satisfying and many have accepted it as basically correct. Perhaps as a result, even though Givón's data were somewhat patchy, rather less has been done to fill the gaps than might have been hoped. Nevertheless some interesting work has resulted. Duranti and Ochs (1979) give a good deal of data on *Italian* discourse and suggest that clitics are moving towards becoming agreement markers in the way predicted. In another detailed study of discourse data, this time from *Swahili*, Wald (1979) tries to improve on Givón's analysis of the rise of object marking. The role of the object marker in various Bantu languages is

taken up by Hyman and Duranti (1982), and in great detail in *Chichewa* by Bresnan and Mchombo (1986, 1987). Claudi (1985, 105–14) documents the early stages of the development of predicate agreement in *Zande*. The different stages of grammaticalization of the categories of person and number, and their interaction with case relations, are documented in Mithun (1991). Finally, there is a useful overview of the development of agreement in general in Lehmann (1982, 251–7; see also Lehmann 1988).

3. Assessment of the Accepted View

In this section we review three areas of Givón's account which are open to question.

3.1. Topic-Shifting

There is considerable evidence to support the view that agreement results from topicalization, part of which we have already considered. More recently, Harris (forthcoming) suggests that in the North-East Caucasian languages *Tabasaran* and *Udi*, new agreement markers have arisen from clitics which were pronominal copies of the topic (here there is evidence for topicalization but no positive evidence for any movement). What is particularly interesting is that the new markers show agreement in person and number, while the old ones marked agreement in class (gender) and number. Moreover, the old agreement system was an ergative one (showing agreement with the absolutive) while the new system shows agreement with the subject.

The claim that agreement (and especially agreement in person) arises from shifting constructions gains considerable support from typological data. Thus Steele (1978, 610–14) found a correlation between certain departures from canonical word order and the existence of person agreement, in particular person agreement in which the agreement markers are similar to the independent pronouns. And in a more detailed study, Foster and Hofling show that:

"In languages which are not typologically regular with regard to word order, irregularly ordered constituents are marked for agreement significantly more frequently than are regularly ordered constituents. [...] Similarly, at a language-specific level, when constituents which appear contiguously in unmarked constructions in the

language are rearranged or separated, agreement tends to appear" (1987, 476).

Clearly if synchronically agreement is more likely when constituents have been 'moved', then this adds weight to the suggestion that shifting constructions provide the source for agreement. (Note that the evidence presented by Foster and Hofling goes well beyond verb agreement.) More generally, the evidence that agreement is more likely with constituents which occur other than in the position expected does not necessarily support topic-shifting as the source. Steele (1977) shows that in various *Uto-Aztecan* languages clitic pronouns move to second position as they become clitics and that from there they may be attracted on to the verb. Here then we have a potential source of verb agreement, with pronouns and movement as essential elements, but with no evidence that a topic-comment construction was involved (1977, 550). Givón (1984, 357 n) appears to accept this possibility. And somewhat earlier, Hale (1973, 339–44) in his discussion of the development of person and number marking in *Warlpiri*, suggested that independent pronouns gave rise to unstressed clitics, which attached to the auxiliary (found in second position). He did not invoke topic-shifting to account for the development. At this point it is worth mentioning that many, including Givón, believed that the position of agreement markers (as prefixes or suffixes) was a clear indication of the language's basic word order at an earlier stage ('today's morphology is yesterday's syntax'). The strong version of this hypothesis is no longer tenable (Comrie 1980 a); for one thing, the positional properties of pronouns frequently differ from those of lexical noun phrases. We conclude that while it seems clear that agreement *can* arise from topic-shifting, this may not be the only mechanism.

3.2. Anaphoric Pronouns as the Sole Source

Givón is quite specific in his claims. Besides postulating topic-shifting as the mechanism by which agreement arises, he claimed that "verb agreement paradigms *always* arise from anaphoric pronoun paradigms" (1976, 180). There is ample evidence to show that pronouns *can* be the source, the question is whether they are the *only* source. Givón pointed to the problems of the Indo-European and Semitic conjugations, and sketched possible solutions. Russell (1984) demon-

strates, however, that the problems with Semitic are indeed severe, and suggests that some agreement forms have non-pronominal source. Another case where a non-pronominal source for agreement markers is proposed is in Chafe's reconstruction of the evolution of verb agreement in *Iroquoian* (1977). He claims that the agreement markers arose "from a reinterpretation of affixes that were already being used for other purposes" (1977, 495). Typically forms which originally marked number were specialized to other categories within the third person (see also Mithun 1993). This analysis might cast doubt on Givón's exclusive claim; but the question remains as to where, in the remote past, the number markers came from. Perhaps Givón's hypothesis can be saved by the claim that originally they must have developed from pronouns; subsequent realignment of agreement markers (or re-grammaticalization) is not excluded by the hypothesis. Another account involving various reanalyses, which lead to complex patterns of agreement markers, is found in the same collection. Haas (1977) shows how in *Muskogean* languages a conjugated auxiliary used with intransitives gave rise to a general set of conjugational suffixes. Haas refers to the variable part of the auxiliary as a pronoun; her account does not therefore constitute a challenge to Givón's hypothesis since a pronominal origin to the agreement markers is implied. It is significant in that it shows how rather different verb conjugations can develop from a common pronominal origin.

Although there are cases of agreement where a pronominal source seems unlikely, there are to my knowledge no clear-cut counter-examples. That is, there are no generally accepted cases of languages which had no form of agreement of the verb and which gained it via a route other than that proposed by Givón. Conversely, as mentioned earlier, the quality of data supporting the general view could be improved. Many examples actually involve the renewal of agreement systems – the development of new agreement morphology to maintain an already functioning agreement system. We would hope to be able to compare a range of instances of the genuine birth of agreement systems, that is, cases where agreement arises in languages which previously had no agreement system. If, however, we take seriously the claim that agreement and pronominalization are part of one larger phenomenon, then the real begin-

ning of agreement must be taken one stage further back, to the rise of pronouns with category distinctions of the type which can lead to agreement systems. These it has been suggested have their origins in classifiers (Greenberg 1978, 78).

4. The Development of Other Types of Agreement

Givón dealt specifically with verb agreement. But there are several further agreement targets whose development of agreement must be accounted for. As we shall see, there are whole areas of agreement other than verb agreement where we find little more than plausible suggestions. Givón (1984, 375) suggests that head-modifier agreement develops from verb agreement, but gives no detail. Lehmann (1982, 254) states that the possibility for this is 'severely restricted'.

Greenberg (1978) shows how agreeing articles can arise from demonstratives; this appears to be a frequent occurrence. He also suggests (1978, 76) that phrases like *the good one* may be a source for the agreement of other noun-phrase elements. If *one* is a pronoun, marked for category such as gender, then adjectives with potential agreement forms arise. If these are then used redundantly even when the noun is present, then noun-modifier agreement results.

A different source is suggested by evidence from the Daly languages of north-west Australia, whose significance was noted by Greenberg (1978, 51–2; 74). Comparison of languages within the group suggests that a small number of nouns have come to be used as classifiers (data from Tryon 1974). In languages of the Maranunggu subgroup, like *Ami*, the words for 'meat', 'vegetable food' and 'tree/stick', which occur as free forms, also occur as prefixes on nouns denoting animals hunted for meat (*awa-wanka* 'shark'), vegetable food and plants (*miya-mimi* 'round yam') and weapons and wooden implements (*yili-mitiwur* 'nullanulla'). Other nouns have no prefix. In the Brinken subgroup, the prefix is found in a reduced form in some cases, not just on the noun but also on the adjective or possessive adjective, both of which stand after the noun: for example, in *Mirityabin* we find *yeli-meltem yeli-yikin* 'my digging-stick'. Some might argue that this is already an agreement system; others would prefer to analyse it as having repeated classifiers. A sub-

sequent stage, which certainly looks like an agreement system is found in the Tyemeri group, in *Ngangikurrunggurr* for example. Here we find that agreement markers do not always match the prefix on the noun (as in Ø-*yawul ali-kere* 'big spear') and they may differ according to whether a possessive adjective or some other adjective is involved. These languages therefore give a clear picture of how agreement within the noun phrase can arise from classifiers. (For a more recent account see Reid 1990.) Dixon (1982, 171–3) also considers the Daly evidence. He proposes a slightly different scenario for the development of gender (class) agreement in Dyirbal (North Queensland). Dyirbal has noun markers (a type of demonstrative which indicate location and visibility). He suggests that classifiers like the widely attested *mayi* 'non-flesh food' stood between the noun marker and the noun and were subsequently reduced:

- (7) bala mayi NOUN →
 visible, there CLASSIFIER
 bala + m NOUN

However, these noun markers can also function rather like pronouns and it could be that the classifier was first attached in this use. These sources all deserve further investigation. None of them imply that verb agreement need exist as a prerequisite.

When we turn to other types of agreement the picture is even less clear. However, one unusual case can be handled readily within the scheme of agreement developing from clitic pronouns: while the verb is the most likely place for permanent attachment (giving rise to agreement) there are other possible sites. Thus in *West Flemish* clitics have attached to complementizers, a situation which Bennis & Haegeman (1984) consider to be agreement of the complementizer. Another type of agreement for which a pronominal source is probable is the agreement of possessive heads with possessors, as in this example from the 'more literary level' of *Modern Hebrew* (Givón 1979, 216–7):

- (8) bet-o shel Yoav
 house-his that-to Yoav
 'Yoav's house'

Such constructions could plausibly arise from afterthought topics. They may in turn give rise, according to Keenan (1978, 175), to a relatively unusual type of agreement: that of prepositions and postpositions with the noun. Adpositions can arise from possessive

constructions; thus a phrase like *behind it* may be expressed as *at back of it*. If the language in question also had agreement of possessive heads with possessors, then agreement of such prepositions (or postpositions) would result: *at-back-his of-John* → *at-back+MASC. of-John*. (For agreement of the possessor see Lehmann 1982, 255–7.)

A large gap in our understanding is the way in which verb agreement systems not based on topic or subject arise. In ergative agreement systems, the verb may agree with the noun in the absolutive case (the agent of intransitives and the patient of transitives). Givón (1984, 370) takes up the suggestion that such systems arise from the reanalysis of passive constructions (in an earlier nominative-accusative system). There is some justification for treating nominative-accusative constructions as more basic, in that we find languages with case marking which works according to ergativity and with agreement on the nominative-accusative model, but not the converse (Comrie 1978, 340; Moravcsik 1978, 259, 263). Nevertheless, ergative constructions can also develop into a nominative-accusative system (Payne 1980, 147–8); it is therefore at least reasonable to look for an independent source for agreement systems based on ergativity. Whatever their original source, such systems can renew themselves without any appeal to reanalysis. This can be seen in *Khinalug* (*Xinalug*), a member of the Lezgian subgroup of North-East Caucasian (data from Kibrik, Kodzasov & Olovjannikova 1972, 117–28; Kibrik personal communication; and Magometov 1976). *Khinalug* has a set of old agreement markers, which have various allomorphs conditioned by complex phonotactic constraints; Ø is a frequent allomorph, and this leads to a weakening of the system. There is also a new set of agreement markers, which are clearly based on the demonstrative/personal pronoun; they are not subject to the same range of variation, and their presence indicates tense (past or future). Both types are illustrated in the example below (cf. table 68.1).

The preverb *k'úr* and the root *qxin* together form a verb meaning 'forget'. It has an internal agreement slot, and the markers show agreement with the direct object according to the indications on the left (the Roman numerals represent the four noun classes, or genders, of *Khinalug*). The second root *k^hu* 'do' makes the verb causative. This root takes a prefixed agreement marker; it is of the same

Table 68.1: 'Cause to forget' in Khinalug (past concrete)

	I	k'úr	-	Ø	-	qɣin	-	Ø	-	k ^h u	-	d	-	mæ
sg	II	k'úr	-	s	-	qɣin	-	s	-	k ^h u	-	dæ	-	mæ
	III	k'úr	-	p ^h	-	qɣin	-	Ø	-	k ^h u	-	dæ	-	mæ
	IV	k'úr	-	Ø	-	qɣin	-	Ø	-	k ^h u(i)	-	ʒ	-	mæ
pl	I-II	k'úr	-	p ^h	-	qɣin	-	Ø	-	k ^h u	-	dur	-	mæ
	III-IV	k'úr	-	Ø	-	qɣin	-	Ø	-	k ^h u(i)	-	ʒit ^h	-	mæ
		preverb		AG		root		AG		root		AG/tense		INDIC

type as the previous one, though the allomorph is different in some instances (it depends on the following consonant). After the second root and before the indicative marker (a form of 'be') there is a third agreement marker, clearly derived from the demonstrative/personal pronoun. Besides marking agreement, it also indicates the tense (past definite). The important point is that these new markers behave just like the old ones in that they mark agreement with the same noun phrase – the one in the absolutive case, which in this instance will be the direct object. Thus an agreement system based on ergativity can renew itself without recourse to reanalysis of a different construction.

Lehmann (1982, 253–4) implies that ergative agreement systems develop directly from pronouns, though he does not give an explicit mechanism for the development. He does, however, incorporate ergative type agreement in a hierarchy giving the steps of evolution of what he calls 'external agreement'.

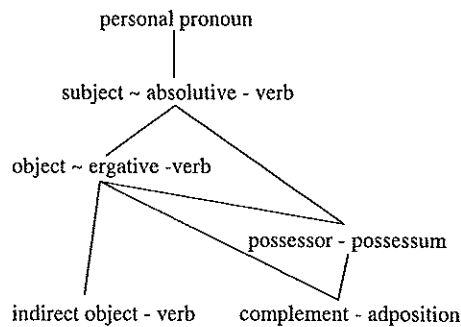


Fig. 68.1: External agreement (Lehmann 1982, 254)

A language can acquire agreement forms only along downward paths from the top.

5. The Loss of Agreement

Givón states that "Agreement systems meet their predictable demise via phonological attrition much like other bound affixes"

(1976, 172). But there are patterns in the loss of agreement systems which are much more interesting and illuminating than this quotation suggests. Attrition may give rise to a situation in which some agreement targets of a particular type mark agreement while others do not. The loss of *French* 'mute e' means that some adjectives agree in gender: *court* (masculine singular) 'short' [kur] *courte* (feminine singular) [kurt], while others, in the spoken language, do not: *vrai* masculine singular 'true', *vraie* (feminine singular) pronounced identically [vre]. The situation is often not so straightforward. Some *Lower Cross* languages have a small set of adjectives which retain number agreement: generally the same adjectives are involved in different languages, but it is not clear what factor determines whether an adjective will agree or not. A necessary condition is that they precede the noun (Faraclas 1986, 48; Connell 1987, 121). And in the Caucasus we find great diversity between related languages as to the number of adjectives which mark agreement.

More significantly, different types of agreement targets lose agreement at different times. Again in *Cross River* languages, numerals and adjectives lose agreement first, while it is preserved in verbs and pronouns (Demuth, Faraclas and Marchese 1986, 459; Connell 1987, 121). More detailed data are available on nine *Kru* languages (Marchese 1988). Here again agreement within the noun phrase is being lost while being preserved outside it. Numerals do not show agreement – this probably represents loss of agreement. Within the noun phrase, adjectives lose agreement in these languages before determiners, and adjectives preserve agreement in number longer than agreement in gender (class). Priestly (1983, 343–6) provides an interesting comparison: he is concerned with the gender agreement in Indo-European and shows how it is usually preserved best in the pronoun and less well in the adjective. There

is fruitful work to be done in this area, investigating other language groups to find the order in which different types of target lose agreement, the order in which different agreement categories (gender, number, person, case) are lost, and the factors which determine which items within a target type (e.g. which attributive adjectives) will retain agreement longest. Even at the level of the loss of a single agreement opposition within a particular target type there may be a great deal going on. In a detailed study Naro (1981) shows how the loss of verb agreement in spoken *Brazilian Portuguese* starts from a low level phonetic rule, which makes third singular and third plural identical for one class of verbs, but that then non-agreement diffuses through the system, mainly in environments where the change is least noticeable in surface form.

6. Finer-Grained Changes in Agreement Systems

There are various types of change which, though not as dramatic as the birth or death of agreement, affect the system and by doing so give insights into how it operates. Harris (1985, 395–412) considers six changes which involve alternations in agreement markers in four *Kartvelian* languages. Most represent complications of the grammar, but reinforce other changes relating to verb type. Payne (1980) documents the unification of agreement markers from different sources in the eastern Iranian Pamir languages. Comrie (1980 b) considers the relation of animacy and voice to agreement, and (1984, 19–23) investigates change in the possessive construction in various *Arabic* dialects. Possessives are particularly prone to reanalysis (Givón 1976, 175–8).

Several constructions regularly cause problems for agreement and so are often involved in change. Conjoined noun phrases frequently allow agreement either with just one conjunct (usually that nearest to the target but sometimes the first even when not nearest) or with all the conjuncts. There is then an agreement option: agreement with one conjunct represents strict or syntactic agreement, while agreement with all conjuncts (involving resolution of gender, number, person – whichever are involved) is agreement with a higher degree of semantic justification. Comitative expressions (like

Russian Ivan s Petrom 'Ivan with Peter') allow a similar option. And quantified expressions may be problematic: for example, in the *Russian* phrase *pjat' knig* 'five books', *pjat'* is not marked for gender and number, while *knig* is in the genitive plural, and controllers of verb agreement in *Russian* must be nominative. Both singular and plural agreement are possible. Certain types of lexical item also give rise to agreement options: again these are cases where meaning and form clash. *German Mädchen* 'girl' is feminine in meaning, but has the neuter diminutive suffix *-chen*: the anaphoric pronoun may be neuter or feminine. Collectives too may have plural meaning but singular morphology; thus *Serbo-Croat deca* 'children' declines like a singular noun but controls singular and plural agreement.

While agreement options are often found with the constructions and lexical items of the types listed, the choice is severely constrained. From the point of view of the agreement controller, controllers denoting animates and those preceding the target are more likely to take agreement forms with a higher degree of semantic justification than those which denote inanimates and/or follow the controller. One possibility for change is that the importance of animacy and precedence relative to each other may vary over time (Corbett 1983, 125–31). And, contrary to some suggestions, there is no necessity that change should be in favour of semantically justified agreement forms: one form may gain over time only to lose again (Corbett 1988, 29–30; 50).

From the point of view of the target, the distribution of alternative agreement forms is constrained by the Agreement Hierarchy:

attributive < predicate < relative pronoun < personal pronoun.

As we move rightwards along the hierarchy, so the likelihood of agreement forms with greater semantic justification will increase monotonically (see Corbett 1991, 225–60 for data). We would predict that change favouring forms with greater semantic justification would proceed from the right of the hierarchy. This has happened, for example with *Russian* words like *vrač* 'doctor', which though they can denote a female remain formally like masculines. The personal pronoun is normally feminine (though the masculine is not completely excluded), the relative almost always feminine; the feminine (semantic

form) is also common in the predicate, though the masculine is also found, and the feminine is beginning to make headway even in attributive position (though here the masculine is the more likely). A development which appears to have spread along the hierarchy in the opposite direction is found in some southern *Polish* dialects (Zaręba 1984–85). Hypochoristics and patronymics used for girls and unmarried women (like *Zusię* 'Zuzia' follow a declension whose nouns are usually neuter. Neuter agreements have spread right along the hierarchy so that girls and unmarried women are referred to with neuter pronouns, and they use the first singular pronoun with neuter agreements to refer to themselves. In these dialects the effect is considerable; the meaning of the genders has been changed. The feminine is now for married females, the neuter for unmarried females (both also include inanimates). Thus agreement fluctuations with constructions or particular lexical items may remain as minor irregularities, but they may spread to give rise to more significant changes, as in the Polish dialects just discussed.

7. Conclusion

Givón's hypothesis according to which verb agreement arises from pronouns through topic-shifting has considerable evidence in its favour and is widely accepted. As we have seen, however, there is some question as to whether the exclusive claims of the hypothesis are valid: it is not at all clear that verb agreement arises only in this way, nor whether topic agreement is always involved. Part of the problem is that some evidence concerns the renewal of agreement systems and it is not self-evident that pristine cases of the rise of agreement necessarily occur in the same way. Agreement of targets other than predicate verbs is a major problem. For agreement within the noun phrase classifiers are a likely source. Our understanding of the relation between agreement categories (notably number, gender and person) is patchy. Thus a promising start has been made, and evidence on the loss of agreement is helping to fill in the picture. But we require data on more languages before we can properly complete or replace Givón's hypothesis.

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69. Tense and Aspect

1. Theoretical Background
2. Historical Change in Tense and Aspect
3. Conclusions
4. References

1. Theoretical Background

In order to understand the mechanisms of diachronic change as they apply to tense-aspect systems, it is necessary to have an understanding of the nature of a synchronic tense-aspect system. The summary given below follows the main lines of Comrie (1976, 16–40, 52–65; 1985, 1–101). Both tense and aspect refer to grammatical categories, and must be sharply distinguished from lexical categories that express similar cognitive oppositions.

1.1. Tense

Tense is the grammaticalized expression of location in time. The best-known tense systems are those in which situations are located in time relative to the present moment, giving rise to the traditional trichotomy of Present (including the present moment, e. g. English *he sings*), Past (located prior to the present moment, e. g. English *he sang*), and Future (located after the present moment, e. g. English *he will sing*). Whether the Future is properly a tense or a mood is a point of controversy both in general linguistic theory and in the analysis of particular categories in individual languages, including the English periphrastic construction with *will*; this point will recur in section 2.4.1. Tense using the present moment as its deictic center in this way is called absolute tense. Relative tense takes a contextually given reference point as its deictic center, giving rise to, for instance, Relative Present (Simultaneous), Relative Past (Anterior), Relative Future (Posterior). In English, many nonfinite verb forms have relative time reference, so that the Present Participle in *the patients waiting for the doctor were then al-*

lowed to enter is taken as simultaneous with the contextually given reference point of when the patients were allowed to enter. Semantically more complex tenses combine absolute and relative time reference; they are traditionally subsumed under relative tenses, though a better term might be absolute-relative tenses. For instance, the Pluperfect, as in *Alfred had already arrived when Betty sang*, locates Alfred's arrival before a contextually given reference point (Betty's singing) which is itself located before the present moment (anterior relative to the past); the Future Perfect, as in *Charles will have arrived before Donna sings*, locates Charles's arrival before a contextually given reference point (Donna's singing) which is itself located after the present moment (anterior relative to the future). A number of languages distinguish in their tense systems not only whether a situation is to be located before or after the present moment (or other reference point), but also how remote from the present moment the situation is located; thus Haya, a Bantu language of Tanzania, has three past tenses: Today Past *twákôma* ['we tied up (earlier today)'], Yesterday Past *tukomile* ['we tied up (yesterday)'], Remote Past *túkakôma* ['we tied up (before yesterday)'] (Ernest Byarushengo, personal communication).

1.2. Aspect

Aspect refers to the grammaticalized expression of the internal temporal contour of a situation. A primary distinction is made between Perfective and Imperfective aspect. Perfective aspect treats a situation as being bounded in time, i. e. as an event. Imperfective aspect treats a situation as being unbounded in time, i. e. as a state or process. Russian *on pročítal knigu* ['he read (Perfective) the book'] refers to a single, complete event of reading the book, including the beginning and end of this event, whereas *on čítal knigu* ['he used to read/was reading (Imperfective) the book'] refers to an ongoing