

## GEORGIAN AND MESKWAKI: TEST CASES FOR THE POLYSYNTHESIS PARAMETER

Areas: Morphosyntax, polysynthesis, parameterization

Baker (1995) has set the groundwork in recent years for research on the typology and theoretical motivation of polysynthetic phenomena. The notion that the linguistic deviation of such languages from more familiar ones may be reducible to the setting of parametric differences has frequently centered on whether and to what extent clusters of properties may be grouped into large-scale (macroparametric) or small-scale (microparametric) units in UG. For Baker, the success brought about by Rizzi (1982) or Kayne (1984) towards microparametric analysis has led many linguists simply to ignore larger generalizations, and in response he postulated the Polysynthesis Parameter to explain the general properties of nonconfigurationality, incorporation, agreement and binding effects commonly seen in many languages described as polysynthetic by the fuzziest, more traditional definition.

In this talk, I will explore the extent to which the 14 criteria cited by Baker as definitional for polysynthetic languages really account for such languages by looking at two case studies of Meskwaki (in Dahlstrom Ms.), an Algonquian language of Iowa, and Modern Georgian (Aronson 1990), supplemented by materials from Old Georgian. It will be seen that a number of properties of these languages diverge from the ideal provided by Baker. In particular, Meskwaki (with 'body'-pronouns) and Georgian (with *tav*-forms and reciprocal pronoun *ertmanet'i* 'each other') both have NP anaphors predicted not to exist as a consequence of the fact that such anaphors would not be able to be properly bound by their (phonologically null) argument antecedent. Although morphocausatives are quite productive in both Georgian and Meskwaki, in neither language are they restricted to unaccusatives, *contra* Baker. A third manner in which both languages diverge from Baker's expectation concerns CP arguments. Both Georgian and Meskwaki possess verbs that subcategorize for clausal arguments. In Georgian, contrary to the Baker's Morphological Visibility Condition, no agreement occurs; in Meskwaki, however, there are clear examples of clausal complements to higher verbs in the form of the COPY-TO-OBJECT construction (Dahlstrom Ms, Ch. 10), which function somewhat like object-raising verbs in English; with such verbs, there is no necessary nominal component, *contra* Baker.

In this talk, the relationship between Old Georgian and Modern Georgian will also be a point of interest because, while both are fairly clearly polysynthetic, and are greatly similar in a great many other respects for languages separated by 1500 years, in Baker's terms they differ on a number of points (to the extent that it is possible to tell with the extant corpus). These languages thus constitute an interesting test case for the development of polysynthetic phenomena and parameterization in general.

### Major Characteristics of Polysynthetic Languages (from Baker 1995 p. 498-99)

Property	Old Geo.	ModGeo.	Meskwaki
1. Syntactic NI	Yes?	Yes	Yes
2. Object Agr obligatory	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. Free pro-drop	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. Free word order	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. No NP reflexive	?	No	No
6. No true quantifiers	?	No; singular agreement	?
7. Obligatory wh-movement	?	Yes, but * long dist. extraction	?
8. N agrees with R-argument	?	?	?
9. No true determiners	No	Yes	Yes
10. N agrees with possessor	No	No	Yes
11. Restricted morphocausative	?	No	No
12. NI or Agr in PP	?	No	Yes
13. CP arguments only if nominal	No	No	No
14. No infinitive	No	Yes	Yes

### Works Cited

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