

Directions of Alignment Change

Natalie Korobzow (University of Cologne/University of Würzburg)

Keywords: Mayan languages, Indo-Iranian languages, diachronic typology, split ergativity, nominalizations

Since Trask (1979) it has been widely acknowledged that the integration of a nominal form into a verbal paradigm may lead to alignment change. Nevertheless, it is also clear that not all cases of verbalization of nominal forms lead to alignment change (on this point cf. Aldridge & Yanagida 2021).

In this talk it will be argued, primarily based on evidence from Mayan and Indo-Iranian languages, that the consequences of nominal integration for alignment crucially depend on the following four factors:

1. The original alignment (sub-)system of the language in question, i.e., whether the affected domain of the grammar originally had, e.g., an ergative-absolutive or a nominative-accusative system.
2. Existing syncretisms in the grammar, e.g., whether possession is expressed by the same markers as structural case.
3. The type of nominal construction that is being verbalized, i.e., whether the nominal form is a participle, a verbal noun or something else.
4. The inherent orientation of the nominal form (if any), e.g., whether a participle is agent-oriented, patient-oriented, absolutive-oriented, or contextually oriented.

The intention of this talk is to provide further proof for the fact that alignment change is best understood as a by-product of other processes – processes like the arising of new constructions as the ones mentioned above – that come together at exactly the right time, a notion expressed e.g., in Harris (2008).

References:

- Aldridge, Edith & Yuko Yanagida. 2021. Two types of alignment change in nominalizations. *Diachronica* 38(3), 314–357.
- Harris, Alice C. 2008. On the explanation of typologically unusual structures. In Jeff Good (ed.), *Linguistic Universals and Language Change*, 54–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Trask, Robert L. 1979. On the origins of ergativity. In Frans Plank (ed.), *Ergativity: Towards a Theory of Grammatical Relations*, 385–404. London: Academic Press.