Overview of Previous Research

My earliest research was in syntax, exploring the theory of relational grammar (*Georgian Syntax: A Study in Relational Grammar*, 1981). This work, recently reprinted (2009), contains one of the first detailed descriptions of the syntax of active/inactive alignment of argument structure and proposes an account of, among many other things, the three-way alignment split for which Georgian is famous. Mentored by David Perlmutter, I published one of the first papers arguing for the universality of the Unaccusative Hypothesis ("Georgian and the Unaccusative Hypothesis", *Language* 58: 290-306, 1982).

In order to discover the origin of the unusual system that underlies Georgian syntax, I turned my attention to historical syntax of the Kartvelian family, which gave me an opportunity to explore the synchronic syntax of the sister languages -- Svan, Laz and Mingrelian (*Diachronic Syntax: The Kartvelian Case* (Syntax and Semantics, 18), 1985). This work led to an interest in the general principles of diachronic syntax, culminating in *Historical Syntax in Cross-Linguistic Perspective* (1995) for which my co-author, Lyle Campbell, and I were awarded the Leonard Bloomfield Book Award in 1998 for the volume which makes the most outstanding contribution to the development of our understanding of language and linguistics .

I believe that it is important that our theories be informed by the full variety found in the languages of the world and that they not be limited by the structures of familiar Indo-European languages. I do not believe that the unusual structures found among languages of the world are mere curiosities; I consider them important challenges to our concepts of what a language can be. *The Indigenous Languages of the Caucasus: Kartvelian* (1991) is one volume of a four-volume work, edited by four different scholars, which attempts to make some of the structure of the languages of the Caucasus better known. I have a strong interest in the documentation of endangered languages and chaired the committee whose work culminated in the joint NSF-NEH-Smithsonian program, Documentating Endangered Languages (DEL).

As I turned my attention to one of these languages, Udi (a member of the Nakh-Daghestanian family), I discovered that in this language clitics were positioned inside roots under certain circumstances. Not believing this myself, I subjected the material to all of the standard arguments to show that these were clitics, not affixes, and that the units in which they occur are really roots of words (*Endoclitics and the Origins of Udi Morphosyntax*, 2002). This led to my other research interests -- the nature of the word, the role of the paradigm, and diachronic morphology.