Dissertation draft

Bernard Comrie <comrie@linguistics.ucsb.edu>   Thu, Feb 25, 2021 at 1:49 PM
To: "Daniel W. Hieber" <dhieber@ucsb.edu>
Cc: Marianne Mithun <mithun@linguistics.ucsb.edu>, stgries@ucsb.edu, Bill Croft <wcroft@unm.edu>

To: Daniel Hieber

Cc: Marianne Mithun

         Stefan Gries

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From: Bernard Comrie

Date: 2021 Feb 25

Subj: Dissertation draft

Dear Danny:

I seem to be the last one by several days to send in comments, for which I apologize, though fortunately I don't think any of my comments will require you to make major changes. There are a couple of discussion points that I mention towards the end of this message, however, that I think it would be worth taking into account in the longer term.

I worked through the draft and wrote up my comment without looking at comments from the other committee members, as this is how I prefer to work. I will, of course, look at their comments in the near future, and certainly before the defense.

I'm attaching a copy of the PDF with some comments. Incidentally, I worked exclusively with the PDF file. My comments include corrections to typos, of which I was able to find remarkably few -- congratulations on the good editing (though of course not only on this)!

Two "typo" items that recur are filled-in rectangles and incorrect right adjustment, which often co-occur, e.g. on pp. 4 and 17 (these refer to the dissertation page numbers, not the PDF file page numbers).

In addition to my specific comments, there are two more general issues I encountered.

One of your conclusions is that flexibility involving modification is less frequent in Nuuchahnulth. But as you note yourself, especially towards the end of the dissertation, modification is overall less frequent in Nuuchahnulth. This leads me to wonder whether your result would have been different if you had measured not raw incidences of flexibility involving modification, but relative to the overall incidence of modification. I could imagine similar issues arising between reference and predication in languages differing in referential density.

What criteria do you use to distinguish between compounds and phrases, in particular in English? For instance, you cite "childhood" as having flexibility between reference and modification. But what decides if, for instance, "childhood dreams" is an instance of modification within a phrase, or a compound noun? Let me hasten to add that I don't have an answer to this, at least not one that I could defend in good conscience, but it is a potential problem, not only language-internally but also across translation equivalents.

Best,

Bernard

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