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Beyond constructions:

Takivatan Bunun predicate-argument structure,
grammatical coherence, ~~and the nature of~~
~~linguistic evidence~~



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Introduction

- Bunun, Austronesian, Taiwan
- Five dialects:
 - Northern: Takibakha, Takituduh
 - Central: Takbanuaz, Takivatan
 - Southern: Isbukun
- Predicate-initial
- Complex verbal morphology

Introduction

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Philippine-type systems

“... a system combining verbal and sometimes nominal morphology that indicates a special relationship between the predicate and any of a number of (typically three to five) syntactic-semantic participant roles in the clause.”

*(De Busser, to appear;
see French 1988)*

Philippine-type systems

- ‘focus’, ‘voice’, ‘argument alignment’, ‘participant orientation’, ... (Blust 2002)
- More than binary opposition
 - Agent, Patient, Location, Instrument, Beneficiary, ...
- Implications for transitivity and valence?
- Syntactic or functional-pragmatic phenomenon?

Takivatan argument alignment

- Verbal suffixes:

- Focus (AF/UF/LF)

(1) *na-ma-tasʔi-Ø-ʔak* *busul*
IRR-DYN-build-AF-1S.TOP gun
'I make a gun'

(2) ... *na pa-tasʔi-un*
so CAUS.DYN-build-UF
'(The thing is broken,) so I want to have it fixed.'

(3) *pa-tasʔi-an*
CAUS.DYN-build-LF
'I want to make it so that something stays in a fixed spot'

Takivatan argument alignment

- Verbal prefixes (I):
 - Participant orientation (BEN/INSTR/...)

(4) *ki-saiv-ʔak* *qaimaŋsuð*
BEN-give-1S.TOP thing
‘Somebody has to give me things.’

(5) *sin-su-suað* *bunuað*
RES.OBJ-REP-grow plum
‘They had grown plums.’
(Indicates that the plums are already on the tree)

Takivatan argument alignment

- Verbal prefixes (II):
 - Internal temporal structure

(7) *ma-baliv-ʔak iðuq a min-puhuq*
DYN-buy-1S.F orange LNK **INCH**-rot
'I bought meat that had become rotten.'

(8) *nitu ma-naskal sadu-ki uskun-an*
NEG **STAT**-happy see-DEF.SIT.PROX together-LO
'I was not happy to see my companions do it like this.'

Takivatan argument alignment

- Verbal prefixes (III):
 - Control (internal/external/joint)
- (6) *pa*-tasʔi-un
CAUS.DYN-make-UF
'I will have it fixed (by someone else).'
- (7) *ka*-daŋað baðbað
ASSOC.DYN-help have.conversation
'I'll help you talk (by speaking in your place).'

Takivatan argument alignment

- Personal pronouns

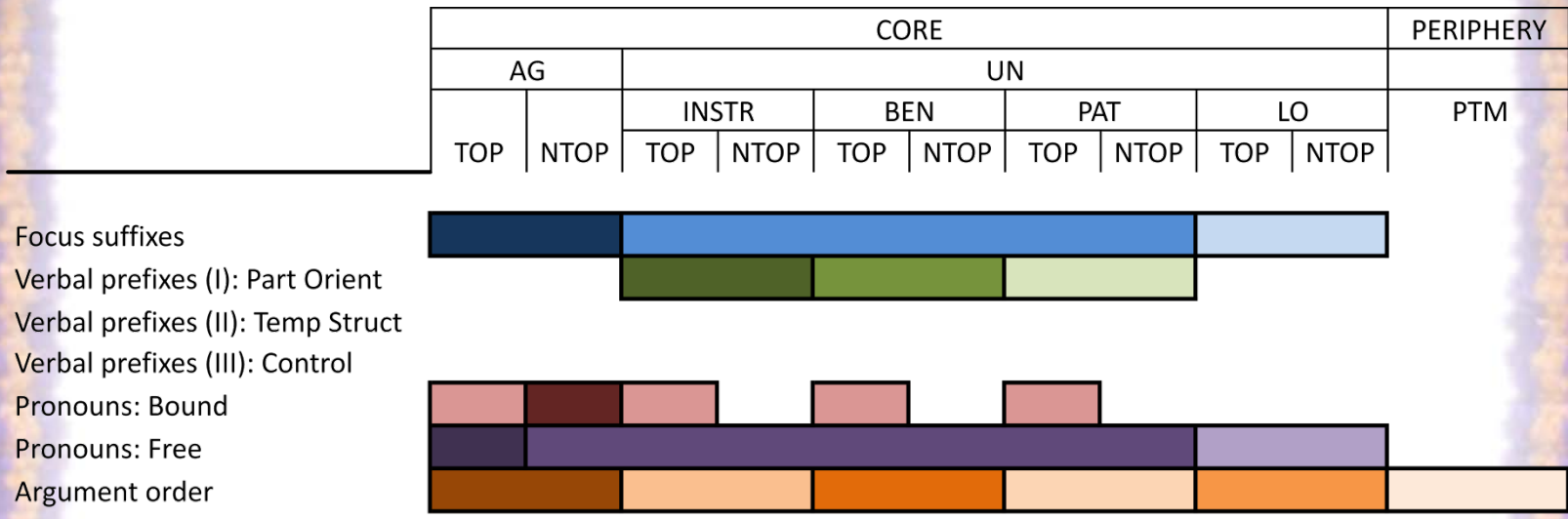
	Bound		Free	
	Topic (TOP)	Non-topical agent (NTOP.AG)	Neutral (N)	Topical agent (TOP.AG)
1S	-(ʔ)ak	-(ʔ)uk	ðaku, nak	sak, saikin
2S	-(ʔ)as	—	suʔu, su	—
1I	—	—	mita	ʔata, inʔata
1E	-(ʔ)am	—	ðami, nam	ðamu, sam
2P	-(ʔ)am	—	muʔu, mu	amu

Takivatan argument alignment

- Free arguments
 - Max. 3
 - Fixed order

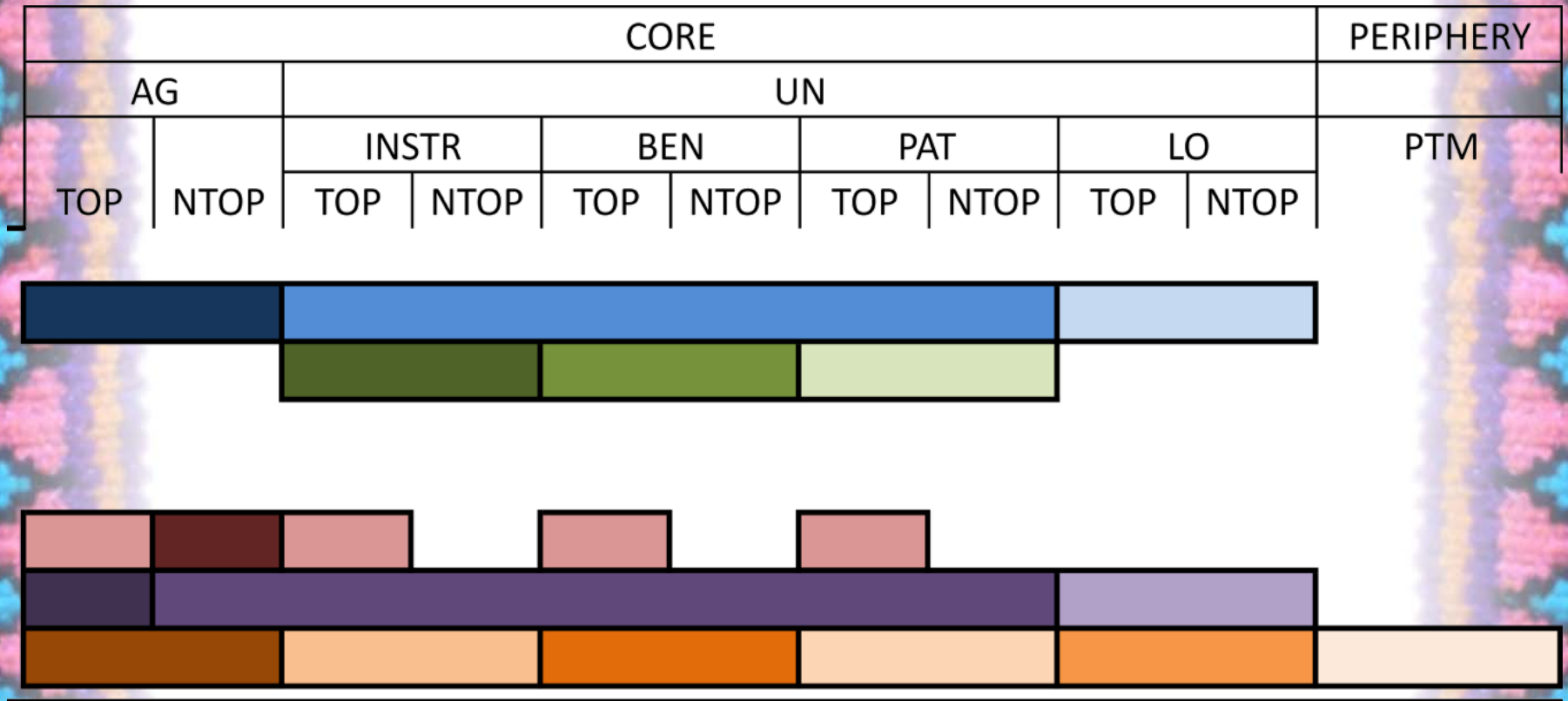
Verb < Agent < Instrument < Beneficiary
< Patient < Location < Place/Time/Manner

Interim conclusion



- Different grammatical distinctions
- Sometimes clashing
- ⇒ This is not a single coherent voice system!

Interim conclusion



What does it all mean?

- Traditional explanation:
 - Active/passive analysis
 - AF: active
 - Other focuses: passive (*Bloomfield 1917*)
 - Ergative analysis
 - One unmarked voice, often the PF
 - Other voices are valency-changing derivations
 - AF: antipassive
 - LF, BF,: applicatives
- (Mithun 1994, and many others)*

Construction grammar

- Focus is:
 - Argument alignment system:
conventionalizes predicate-argument relationships
 - Not fully grammaticalized / not fully grammatically abstract
 - Conventionalization at the level of functional roles (AG, PAT, LO) rather than abstract syntactic categories (S, A, O)

Construction grammar

Grammatical roles

St V O / Si V

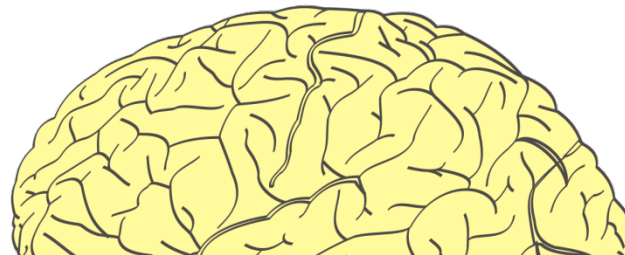
Functional roles

Event Act Pat Ben Instr Loc ...

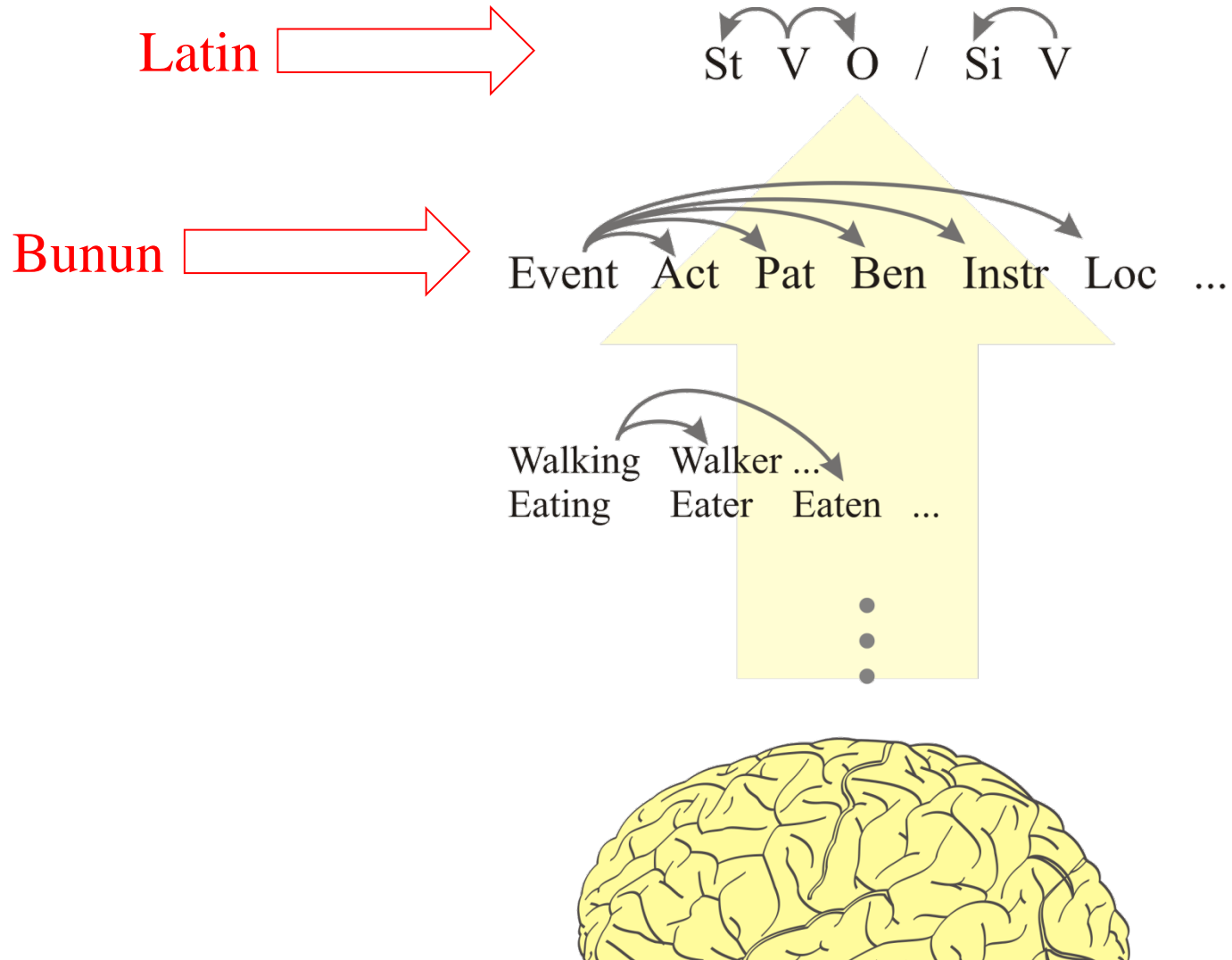
Conceptual roles

Walking Walker ...
Eating Eater Eaten ...

Concepts



Construction grammar



Construction grammar

- Problem:
 - In its simplest form, the interpretation above presupposes the existence of a single coherent system
 - We saw that Takivatan predicate-argument structure consists of multiple subsystems that are partly clashing with each other.

... And Beyond

- The predicate-argument structure as a unitary grammatical system...
 - is an artifact of linguistic theory
 - does not correspond to cognitive reality
 - is partly incoherent

... And Beyond

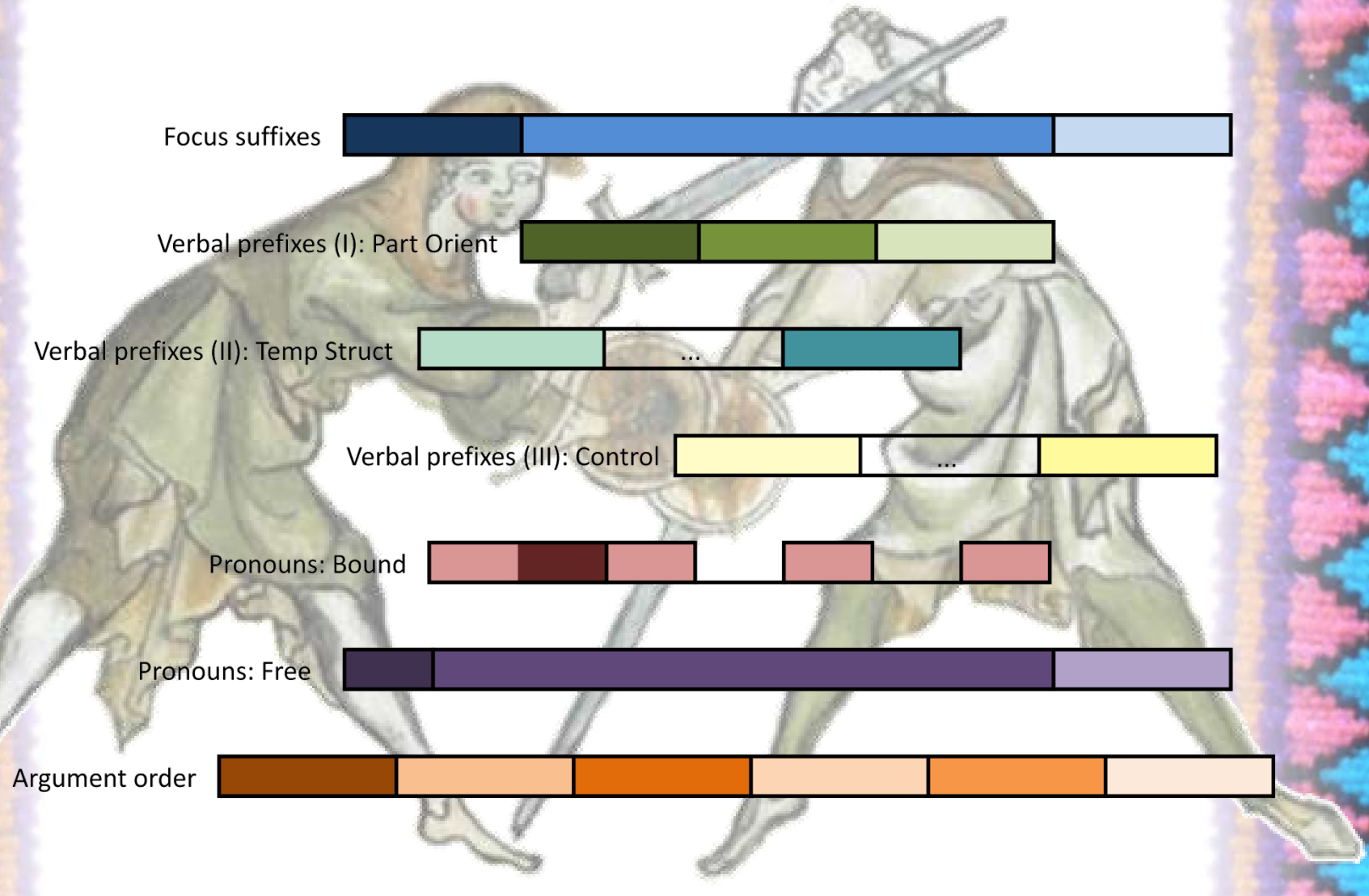
- Cooperation and competition in a modular complex system
 - Different grammatical subsystems
 - ... some of which cooperate with each other
 - ... some of which compete with each other
 - ... but which together fulfill a function perceived as coherent by the language users

... And Beyond

- Definition:

Modularity refers to the behaviour of complex systems to organise themselves into smaller subsystems which operate with a relative autonomy, i.e. the modules of such a system contain significantly more intramodular than intermodular relationships.

... And Beyond



... And Beyond

- Modularity
 - Naturally arises in complex adaptive systems (e.g. complex organisms; see Lorenz 2011)
 - Can account for partly incompatible subsystems

≠ Innate language modules!!!

= evolved internal organization in complex biological (and other?) systems

Language evolution



Conclusion

- Bunun predicate-argument structure is realized by multiple, partly incompatible subsystems
- \Rightarrow Bunun voice/focus does not exist, except as a theoretical artifact
- Emergence can account for multiple voice distinctions
- Evolutionary modularity can account for the evolution of partly incoherent subsystems

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Uninaŋ
miqumisaŋ!

