

Linguistic Theory and Language Description
180 minutes

Task 1. **Scientia potentia**

In a language L, the following is true:

- a) there are regular and irregular verbs;
- b) no irregular verb ends in *-ks*;
- c) if a word has stress on the ultimate syllable and does not end in *-ks*, it is not a verb;

Is it true that not all verbs in L have stress on the ultimate syllable?

Task 2. **Hummus**

(based on Hajek 2005, Maddieson 2015; sources Heath 1999 and Jones and Jones 1991)

In a phonetic inventory of a language, nasal vowels may count from few (one – [ũ] – in Maba, Nilo-Saharan) to many (ten in Apuriña, Arawakan). How rich the nasal vowel inventory is is usually considered as compared to the number of oral (i.e. non-nasal) vowels. E.g., in Maba, there are 12 oral vowels vs. one nasal vowel; while in Apuriña the number of nasal vowels is exactly the same as the number of oral vowels, which is not infrequent in South America in general. Compare vowel inventories from Barasano (Tucanoan, Colombia; nasal to vowel ratio 6:6) and Koyra Chiini Songhai (Africa; nasal to oral vowel ratio 9:10). The inventories are followed by examples.

Fig. 1

Vocalic inventories of Koyra Chiini and Barasano

Koyra Chiini Songhai				Barasano		
short		long				
i ĩ	u ũ	i: ĩ:	u:	i ĩ	ʉ ũ	u ũ
e ě	o õ	e:	o: õ:	e ě		o õ
ã	a ã		a: ã:		a ã	

Koyra Chiini examples:

- (1) *saahĩ* ‘be solid’
- (2) *fusũ* ‘blow’
- (3) *tẽfer* ‘a worn-out mat’
- (4) *hãwhãw* ‘barking’

Barasano examples:

- (1) *sũkã-ãkã*
baby-Dim
‘a little baby’
- (2) *yãgõ-bũ* *yũ*
talk-Pst I
‘I spoke’
- (3) *ãbĩ-sẽ-rẽ*
pick.up-Nmlz-Obj
‘what he picked up’
- (4) *ahĩ-a-ti* *bũ*
hear-Prs-Intrg you
‘Do you understand?’

Explain the difference between the systems observed in Barasano and Koyra Chiini Songhai and their consequences on the oral/nasal ratio. Are the high ratios in the two languages directly comparable?

Glosses: Dim – diminutive, Nmlz – nominalization, Obj – object form (DO), Pst – past, Prs – present, Intrg – interrogative.

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Task 3. *Veni, vidi, vici.*

In some languages – e.g. Romance – the basic verb for ‘come’ essentially means ‘come here’, and is used when the goal of motion is associated with the speech act location. Cf. e.g. (1) and (2):

(1) Portuguese

Ele vem um pouco mais tarde.

he come.3Sg a.bit more late

‘He will come a bit later’

(to where I am now)

(2) Portuguese

**O seu marido vem a casa sempre mais tarde.*

DEF his/her husband come.3Sg at house always more late

‘Her husband comes home later every day.’

Similarly, in French (3) is only possible when the locutor is a co-worker of the person (s)he refers to):

(3) French

Ces jours-ci, il vient tard au travail.

these days=here he come.3Sg late to.Def work

‘He comes home late these days.’

Thus, French and Portuguese, as well as Italian and Spanish, all have the same verb of coming that is sometimes termed ‘ventive’ or ‘venitive’. However, Italian and French also allow the following contexts, which apparently deviate from this rule and seem to be impossible Portuguese:

(4) French

Je viens demain / te chercher tout de suite.

I come.1Sg tomorrow / you.Obj seek at.once

‘I am coming tomorrow / for you at once’

(when speaking on the phone, not being at the Goal location)

(5) Italian

Vengo subito!

come.1Sg at.once

‘I am coming!’

(as when yelling from one room to another, again the location of the Goal is different from the location of the speaker)

Do you think French and Italian do or do not have a special ‘ventive’ verb of motion? How do you explain the difference between French vs. Portuguese? Explain your opinion by dealing with the special uses in French and Italian.

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