

Olga Krasnoukhova

The Noun Phrase in the Languages of South America

This dissertation presents the first cross-linguistic study of the Noun Phrase in the indigenous languages of South America. It builds upon a considerable amount of data that have recently become available for languages in this continent. Based on a sample of 55 languages, this study gives a novel account of the syntactic, morphosyntactic, and semantic properties of the NP. For example, the analysis shows that personal pronouns commonly receive the same possessive markers as nominal possessors, which implies that a fully grammaticalized category of possessive pronouns is rare in South American languages. In addition, the new South American data only partly confirm typological claims for tendencies in the NP domain. For instance, a morphologically distinct class of adjectives is found in many languages of the sample; however, this class is often small, and the dominant way to encode property concepts is with verbs. Finally, this study also includes a discussion of the geographic patterning of structural features in the NP, evaluating the assumption that there is a major typological split between so-called Andean and Amazonian languages. The analysis shows that most of the features cannot be attributed to either of these larger areas. It also demonstrates, however, that there is some evidence for a broad structural division of languages into the western part of the continent (corresponding to the Andean sphere) and the rest of the continent. One of the features that define this split is the parameter of alienability.

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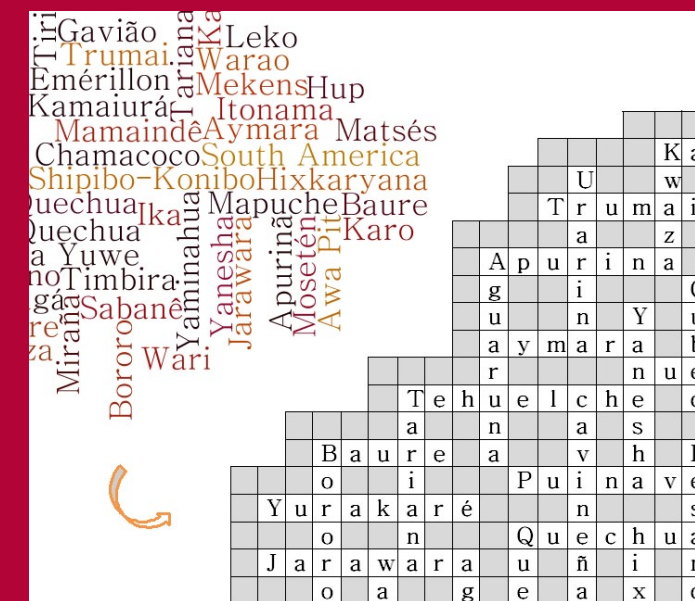
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