Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads

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1 *Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,*
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

6 *Then took the other, as just as fair,*
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

11 *And both that morning equally lay*
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

16 *I shall be telling this with a sigh*
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost, 'The road not taken'

Welcome to *Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads* (LTC), a new journal dedicated to the crossroads where linguistic typology meets its neighboring fields.

A crossroads is not only and necessarily a place where a choice must be made: this is the point of view of the traveler, wondering which way to go. If we take a bird's-eye view and observe the crossroads from above, we see much more than choices. A Crossroads is the place where different directions, and different travelers, meet or follow each other. Thanks to the crossroads, it is possible to change and exchange, and the very concept of 'step forward' opens itself to diagonals and curves. The crossroads is where future is imagined and innovation occurs, thanks to the reciprocal influence of intersecting perspectives.

Crossroads means meeting, exchanging, converging, choosing, diverging, changing, and possibly making the difference.

This journal aims to take the point of view of the crossroads, capturing the moment when linguistic typology intersects other fields, changing and exchanging methods, theories and data, in the belief that a closer look at the crossroads may reveal converging paths and new directions to go.

Aiming to find, describe and explain linguistic diversity, linguistic typology naturally crosses the study of the emergence and evolution of the world's grammars (Bybee 2015) and the observation of language-internal variation (Croft 2000, 2007). Likewise, explanations for language universals and cross-linguistic tendencies are typically found in discourse use, paths of language change and/or cognitive mechanisms (Keller 1994, Hawkins 2004 and 2014, Haspelmath 2021, among others). This means that the methodological and theoretical tools of linguistic typology are by definition at least partially shared with neighboring fields, in a dynamic intersection that can be itself described as an ever-changing crossroads.

Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads aims to give space above all, but not exclusively, to studies exploring the crossroads at which linguistic typology meets areas of linguistics, such as language documentation, language change, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, language technology, educational linguistics, corpus-based analysis of speech and discourse.

Thanks to the advanced infrastructure provided by ABIS-AlmaDL at the University of Bologna and to the support of the Department of *Classical Philology and Italian Studies* (FICLIT) and the Department of *Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures* (LILEC), the journal meets the highest international standards for scientific publications. *Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads* is indeed the first peer-reviewed journal in the field of linguistic typology that provides immediate and free open access to all publications, with no embargo and no publication fees (Diamond OA).

The journal publishes two issues per year. Papers accepted for publication are selected solely on the basis of scientific quality and scholarly standing, after undergoing a double-blind peer-review. Members of the Editorial and Scientific Committee have been invited based on their scientific profile and their expertise in different areas and approaches to linguistic typology.

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website, a collaborative wiki, departmental website, social media websites, institutional repository or non-commercial subject-based repositories).

This first issue is thematic and focuses on **comparative constructions across languages**. It gathers selected contributions from the TypoBO Workshop,[1] organized for the Summer 2020 and canceled due to the COVID pandemic.

Comparative constructions are a set of grammatical strategies that the languages of the world use to compare two or more items in order to highlight both differences and similarities among them (cf. Dixon 2008, Stolz 2013, Treis 2018). We can recognize different types of comparative constructions depending on the kind of relationship existing between the two (or more) items (Fuchs 2014, Treis 2018). The first relevant distinction to be made is between quantitative comparison and qualitative comparison (cf. Treis 2018: iii): quantitative comparison can be further divided into comparison of inequality (superiority, e.g. *taller than, tallest,* or inferiority, e.g. *less tall than, least tall*) or equality (e.g. *as tall as),* while qualitative comparison can be further distinguished into similarity (e.g. *like a horse*) and simulation (e.g. *as if he were a horse*).

In this issue, the contributions by Ivani and Gaeta take into account comparative constructions of inequality, in Tibeto-Burman languages and across German minorities of Italy, respectively. The comparison of inferiority is instead studied by Modina, both from a cross-linguistic point of view and with a focus on Russian, and by Audring & Leufkens & van Lier, who provide a comprehensive typology of verbal diminutives. Equality and similarity relations are the object of Irsara's paper, who examines Ladin data in a comparative perspective with Italian and English, while simulation (or hypothetical manner) is investigated in a typological language-sample by Martínez.

The languages of the world exhibit several different formal strategies to express these functions (e.g. Ultan 1972, Andersen 1983, Stassen 1985, Cuzzolin & Lehmann 2004, Dixon 2008, Stolz 2013, Treis & Vanhove 2017, Treis 2018). However, we can generally identify some elements that are cross-linguistically recurrent within a comparative construction (cf. Stolz 2013: 9 and Treis 2018: ii). The comparee and the

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https://eventi.unibo.it/typobo-2020

standard are the items being compared to each other, respectively, the *primum comparationis* (comparee) and the *secundum comparationis* (standard). The parameter or quality is the property on which comparee and standard are compared (*tertium comparationis*). The degree (or parameter) marker explicates the kind of relationship that comparee and standard have with respect to the parameter/quality (e.g. *more, less, as … as* in English). Finally, the tie or standard marker is the grammatical function or relation that connects comparee, standard, and quality (e.g. *than* in English).

Standard markers of comparison seem to develop out of a restricted set of recurrent sources (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2002), such as verbal forms meaning 'exceed/ defeat/surpass' (Cantonese k*wo* 'surpass' > *kwo* 'than') and interrogative adverbs (Hungarian *mint* 'how' > *mint* 'than'). In this issue, the paper by Jäger traces the diachronic development of comparison constructions crosslinguistically, highlighting a recurrent pattern of change with respect to standard markers, i.e. what she calls the comparative cycle. A diachronic perspective is also adopted by Kobozeva & Serdobolskaya, who follow the evolution of Russian standard markers *kako* and *aky*.

Papers in this first issue combine studies based on typological samples (cf. papers by Audring & Leufkens & van Lier, Martínez, and Jäger) with studies focusing on particular linguistic areas or families (cf. Gaeta on German minorities in Italy, Ivani on Tibeto-Burman, Irsara on Ladin, Modina and Kobozeva & Serdobolskaya on Russian), integrating the analysis of descriptive grammars with the analysis of corpus data, to actually understand the discourse use of comparatives (cf. Modina on Russian, Irsara on Ladin). The typological approach thus fruitfully stands at the intersection with a sociolinguistic and areal perspective (especially in Ivani's, Irsara's and Gaeta's contributions), with diachronic methodology (cf. papers by Jäger, Kobozeva & Serdobolskaya, and Gaeta) and with corpus-based research (cf. contributions by Modina, Irsara, Kobozeva & Serdobolskaya).

Linguistic typology is at the crossroads. See you there!

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