



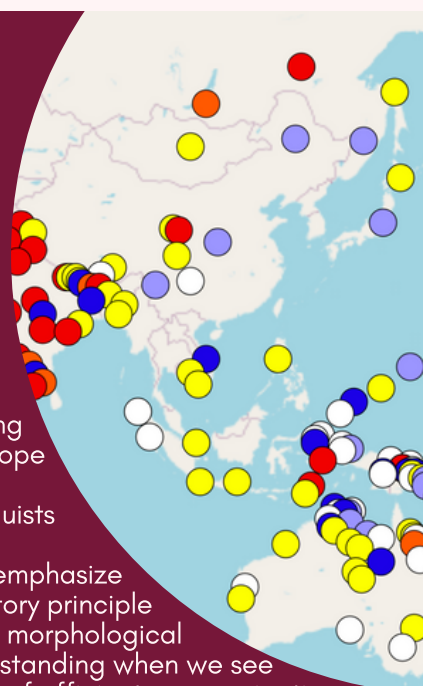
Efficiency Explanations

of Grammatical Patterns

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Cost-benefit analyses are well-known from economics, but have not traditionally played an important role in understanding languages. Linguistics arose from philology, which was primarily concerned with the interpretation of texts. Even today, most attempts at understanding sentence and word structure are based on the hope of detecting a greater match between form and meaning than appears to exist at first blush. Linguists see themselves primarily as semioticians, not as economists – but this is insufficient. In this talk, I emphasize the importance of efficiency as a basic explanatory principle for language structures. In sound systems, and in morphological and syntactic structures, we reach deeper understanding when we see language structures also as answers to the need of efficient communication.



FRIDAY 9 APR 2021

10AM TO 11:30 AM (AZ)

1 PM TO 2:30 PM (EST)

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Martin Haspelmath works at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig (Germany), and is interested in the grammatical diversity of languages worldwide. He is one of the editors of the World Atlas of Language Structures (<https://wals.info>).