

Typological Prevalence Hypothesis: The Case of Kinship

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Abstract

Languages across the world organize semantic categories in many ways. Research in semantic typology and efficient communication has shown that languages tend to be shaped by pressures for communicative efficiency. It was recently proposed, in addition to this principle of efficiency, that the cross-linguistic prevalence of a system is explained by considering and formalizing the Typological Prevalence Hypothesis. This recent research found that the interaction between communicative and developmental pressures infers the prevalence of color-naming systems across the world better than phylogenetic relatedness alone. However, it is not yet clear whether the information-theoretic framework developed by the authors can explain the typological prevalence of non-perceptual categories. Therefore, we extend this model to kinship systems to test if this formalization of the Typological Prevalence Hypothesis can generalize to other semantic domains.