

ALT News No. 50

December 2012

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## 1. Message from the president

Rita Levi-Montalcini, a neuroscientist who shared the 1986 Nobel Prize in Medicine, entitles her autobiography *In Praise of Imperfection* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). In her epigraph she quotes Yeats's *The Choice*: "The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life, or of the work ..." She describes herself as pursuing her own inclinations with total dedication, thereby reconciling Yeats's irreconcilables by deriving joy from what she describes as imperfection of both life and work.

I'd say the practicing scientist today faces not two but four irreconcilable imperatives of knowledge transmission: expansion of knowledge in one's own work; appreciation and exemplification in one's personal life; transmission to one's own next generation; and training successful students who take off independently. Not only can you not reach perfection at all four of these; you probably can't hope to even do garden-variety well at all four. Severe imperfection and transmission breaks are inevitable.

Except that there was Sasha Kibrik (1939-2012), a founding member of ALT, a linguist of enormous impact, and an all-around great person. He jump-started a field tradition in Moscow, later teaming up with Sandro Kodzasov in an influential series of summer field trips to Daghestan and Siberia, in which students together with Kibrik and Kodzasov undertook blitz intensive description, including innovative work on syntax. Publications resulting from these expeditions changed the way we understand ergativity, coreference, argument structure, case paradigms, and much else, and definitively clarified the phonetics and phonology of the complex sound systems of Daghestan, including phonation and tones. Sasha's *Materials for a Typology of Ergativity* (*Materialy k tipologii èrgativnosti*, published as a set of brochures 1979-1981, reprinted in his *Konstanty i peremennye jazyka*, 2003) set a new standard for comprehensive description of valence, alignment, and coreference-related syntactic processes. Kibrik & Kodzasov's two-volume comparative lexical survey of Daghestanian languages *Sopostavitel'noe izuchenie dagestanskix jazykov*, 1988, 1990) is a comprehensive account of lexical semantics, valence and argument structure, conjugation and declension class, etc. for a large wordlist across all Nakh-Daghestanian languages for which information was then available. To my knowledge there is still nothing comparable for any other language family.

Sasha and his family lived a life of high quality and good cheer in the straitened Soviet and post-Soviet context, and they were a conviviality node in a large network of colleagues and friends around the world. No pollyanna by any means, he nonetheless exhibited consistent goodwill toward his fellow

human beings. He and Nina raised a notably fine family, and our own ALT member Andrej Aleksandrovich is a leading Athabaskanist and typologist. Several generations of young Moscow linguists of the most varied interests got their field training and important parts of their analytic training in these expeditions. Sasha's passing leaves a large dark hole in typology, fieldwork, and linguistics of the Caucasus. One thinks of the phrase "the end of an era", but it isn't. The era began with his first field expedition to Daghestan, or perhaps with the publication of his coauthored *Fragments of Khinalug Grammar* (*Fragmenty grammatiki xinalugskogo jazyka*, 1972) or the 1970-1971 field expeditions that produced it. That era has not closed; the tradition is going strong and expanding, and Sasha's students and their students are continuing sophisticated fieldwork, typology, and theoretical work across Russia and elsewhere.

What an example, and what a legacy. We are fortunate to have had him as a friend and colleague. Now, everybody, go forth, take heart, and emulate.

I'll use this newsletter to announce some new initiatives on ALT's organization. The Executive Committee will soon be issuing a poll of members (and interested non-members), and we very much need your responses. Look for it on the LINGTYP list and the ALT website soon. We'll act on whatever trends or drafts emerge, and we'll consider seriously every single response. So: What is typology? Where is it going, and where should it go? Who are you as a typologist? What do you want from the profession and from ALT? What do you like, and/or what would you change, about our journal *Linguistic Typology* or the ALT Conference? Here's your chance to chime in.

I'll be holding an office hour, or office hours, at the upcoming ALT Conference in Leipzig, and will be glad to hear comments, reactions, suggestions, laments, or whatever on the state of the field and its development. But to have your opinions count, respond to the survey!

And we'll be, or I'll be, sending out a call for volunteers, nominations, and general expressions of interest in serving on ALT committees or as officers in the not-too-distant future; watch for that as well.

Best wishes to everyone for the imminent new year, from myself and the entire Executive Committee.

Johanna Nichols

## **2. ALT10 in Leipzig**

### *2.1. Final call*

Please note the deadline: **January 15, 2013.**

August 15 - 18, 2013 (Thursday - Sunday)

([http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/conference/2013\\_ALT10/](http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/conference/2013_ALT10/))

Abstracts on any topic in typology are invited for oral presentations or posters. Non-members of ALT may submit abstracts but will be expected to join ALT in order to present a paper at the meeting. Oral presentations may be submitted with the specification of a theme session; they will then be jointly evaluated by the Programme Committee and the theme-session convenor(s).

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: January 15, 2013 (papers/posters) or December 10, 2012 (theme sessions)

Notification of acceptance: February 28, 2013

Papers are anonymously reviewed; in line with previous meetings, the committee will strive to ensure that selection is rigorous but that acceptance rate is not too low.

### **Categories of submission**

(1) Oral presentation (single or multiple author): Timing will depend on the number of papers accepted for presentation and will most probably range between 20 and 25 minutes per paper, plus 10 minutes for discussion.

(2) Poster: One or more poster sessions will be organized, depending on demand.

(3) Oral/poster: This means you prefer an oral presentation but can also present a poster. If there are more good abstracts than we can accommodate, the Programme Committee will schedule some as posters. If you choose either category "poster" or "oral/poster", this will probably increase your chances of acceptance.

### **Theme sessions**

(more detailed descriptions are available [here](#))

1. Generalized noun modifying clause constructions (Convenor: Yoshiko Matsumoto)

2. Typological hierarchies in synchrony and diachrony  
(Convenors: Sonia Cristofaro, Fernando Zúñiga, Karin Stüber)

3. Lexical typology of qualitative concepts (Convenors:  
Ekaterina Rakhilina & Tatiana Reznikova)

4. Linked Data in Linguistic Typology (Convenor: Sebastian  
Nordhoff)

5. Quantitative Linguistic Typology: State-of-the-Art and  
Beyond (Convenor: Harald Hammarström)

6. Predicate-centered focus from a cross-linguistic  
perspective (Convenors: Tom Güldemann & Ines Fiedler)

### **How to submit an abstract**

Send your abstract as a pdf e-mail attachment to:  
[alt10@eva.mpg.de](mailto:alt10@eva.mpg.de)

Subject header: (your name) ALT 10 abstract

Include these things in the body of the email:

- authors' names
- abstract title
- contact information: e-mail, phone, fax

Note: One individual may be involved in a maximum of two  
abstracts (maximum of one as sole author), regardless of  
category (oral, poster, theme-session talk).

### **Abstract specifications**

Maximum length: 500 words or 1 single-spaced page.

Please put this information at the top of your abstract:

- abstract title
- abstract category (oral, poster, oral/poster)
- theme session (if applicable)

Format: If at all possible, please send your abstract as a pdf.

Name: Give your pdf a filename similar to the subject header.

Anonymity: Abstracts must be anonymous: do not put your name  
or other identifying information on the abstract. Also, please  
anonymize your pdf by removing identifying information.

## **ALT Programme Committee**

Stephen Matthews (U Hong Kong, chair)  
Bernard Comrie (MPI-EVA, Leipzig)  
Hilary Chappell (EHESS, Paris)  
Michael Daniel (MGU and HSE, Moscow)  
Mark Donohue (ANU, Canberra)  
Martin Haspelmath (MPI-EVA, Leipzig)

## 2.2. Theme sessions

The following theme sessions have been accepted for ALT10. More detailed descriptions are available [here](#).

All theme sessions are open: linguists who were not initially contacted by the convenors still have a chance to submit an abstract. Abstracts for theme sessions should be submitted by January 15th, and should follow the guidelines mentioned above.

1. Generalized noun modifying clause constructions (Convenor: Yoshiko Matsumoto)

2. Typological hierarchies in synchrony and diachrony (Convenors: Sonia Cristofaro, Fernando Zúñiga, Karin Stüber)

3. Lexical typology of qualitative concepts (Convenors: Ekaterina Rakhilina & Tatiana Reznikova)

4. Linked Data in Linguistic Typology (Convenor: Sebastian Nordhoff)

5. Quantitative Linguistic Typology: State-of-the-Art and Beyond (Convenor: Harald Hammarström)

6. Predicate-centered focus from a cross-linguistic perspective (Convenors: Tom Güldemann & Ines Fiedler)

### 2.3. Adjacent workshops

There will be a large number of adjacent workshops in Leipzig, both before and after ALT10. More information about the workshops can be found [here](#).

Preliminary workshop information:

[The relative frequencies of nouns, pronouns, and verbs in discourse. An international workshop](#)

Organized by Frank Seifart et al.  
August 12-13, 2012

[Workshop on Corpus-based Quantitative Typology \(CoQuaT 2013\)](#)

Organized by Michael Cysouw et al.  
August 14th (University of Leipzig)

*Language acquisition and typology*

Organized by Sabine Stoll (U Zurich) & Elena Lieven (U Manchester & MPI-EVA)  
August 14th (before ALT)

*Phonetic/phonological typology and fieldwork*

Organized by Heriberto Avelino  
August 14th (before ALT)

[Valency classes in the world's languages](#)

Organized by Iren Hartmann & Martin Haspelmath  
August 14th-15th (before ALT)

[Creole and pidgin language structure in cross-linguistic perspective](#)

Organized by Susanne Maria Michaelis  
August 18th-19th (after ALT)

*Language diversity and prehistory*

Organized by Søren Wichmann & Willem Adelaar (U Leiden)  
August 19th

*Tense, aspect, modality and evidentiality in Nakh-Daghestanian languages*

Organized by Diana Forker (U Bamberg) and Oleg Belyaev (RAS Moscow)  
August 19th

### **3. ALT awards**

#### *3.1. Final call: Greenberg Award 2013*

Please note the deadline: **January 31, 2013.**

The Association for Linguistic Typology's Joseph Greenberg Award recognizes and honours the best piece of typological research embodied in a doctoral dissertation or equivalent in 2011-2012. Theses are eligible if they were accepted by a university (i.e. passed or defended or accepted, and not just submitted) between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2012. In addition, theses submitted for the previous round (2009-2010, when the award was postponed because of the small number of submissions) will be also be entered for this round.

The award will consist of (full or partial) payment of travel, per diem expenses and registration fee to attend the 10th ALT Conference, to be held in Leipzig, August 15-18, 2013, and to present a synopsis or element of the prize-winning work as a plenary lecture at that meeting.

The Joseph Greenberg Award was named to remember Joseph Greenberg's (1915-2001) fundamental contributions to typology and the interest he showed in encouraging young researchers. Between 1998 and 2006, it was known as the "ALT Junior Award".

To be eligible, those submitting their dissertation must be members of the Association for Linguistic Typology (ALT). They are asked to submit their manuscript by email in pdf format, with all non-standard fonts in Unicode, to the chair of the jury, to arrive no later than January 31st 2013. If this proves technically difficult, the candidate is asked to discuss the problem with the chair. A jury, consisting of about ten ALT members, will be appointed by ALT's president, appropriate to the work submitted.

The chair will be:

Jae Jung Song  
Department of English & Linguistics  
University of Otago  
PO Box 56, Dunedin  
New Zealand  
[jaejung.song@otago.ac.nz](mailto:jaejung.song@otago.ac.nz)

### 3.2. *Final call: Gabelentz Award 2013*

Please note the deadline: **January 15, 2013.**

Submissions are invited for the second Georg von der Gabelentz Award, for a grammar published between January 1st 2009 and December 31st 2012. The award will be made at the 10th Biennial Conference of the Association for Linguistic Typology in Leipzig, August 15-18, 2013.

The Gabelentz Award was established to encourage and honour achievements in the field of documenting the world's linguistic diversity through the writing of reference grammars. To be eligible, a grammar must provide a systematic, accessible, comprehensive, original, insightful and typologically well-informed account of the workings of the language being described, generously exemplified with natural data. Though the normal expectation is that it would deal with a hitherto little-described language, outstanding grammars of better-known languages or dialects thereof may also be considered if they achieve major breakthroughs in a comprehensive understanding of the language. Grammars may be written in any major language, subject to the availability of a sufficient and geographically balanced set of jury members able to read the language.

Entries will be judged by a committee of half-a-dozen or more distinguished linguists, including a number of judges who have themselves written major reference grammars but also typologists and other categories of grammar users. The chair for the 2013 award will be Hein van der Voort. Prize winners for the Gabelentz award will receive support for travel, accommodation and registration at the ALT conference in Leipzig, as well as a collection of reference grammars and other works donated by major publishers in the area. They will also present a plenary lecture setting out the typologically most interesting aspects of the language.

Any grammar published between January 1st 2009 and December 31st 2012 will be eligible provided that it meets the conditions above and that the author is a member of the Association for Linguistic Typology. Grammars which have been submitted for the Panini Award (for a grammar dissertation) can be submitted again for the Gabelentz Award provided that they have been substantially revised and published by an academic publisher. Grammars which win the Panini Award cannot be submitted at a later date for the Gabelentz Award. All submissions for the Gabelentz Award need to be published by an academic publisher.

Entries are normally submitted as a PDF file with embedded

fonts. Hard copies can be sent in exceptional circumstances only (e.g. if the publisher does not agree to a PDF version being submitted or if the author is not in a position to make a PDF version, for whatever reason) and with prior agreement by the chair of the committee. If hard copies are submitted, the exact number of copies to be submitted will vary according to the size of the committee, but a minimum of six copies is to be expected. Submitted hard copies remain the property of the members of the jury. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2013.

The address for submissions for the 2013 Gabelentz Award is:

Hein van der Voort  
Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi  
CCH-Linguística  
Av. Perimetral, 1901 - Terra Firme  
CEP: 66077-830, Belém, Pará, Brazil  
[gabelentz2013@gmail.com](mailto:gabelentz2013@gmail.com)

#### **4. Membership rates for 2013**

de Gruyter Mouton has announced the new membership rates for 2013. Membership with print subscription to LT remains stable at €68 / \$99 (plus shipping and handling) for regular members and €43 / \$65 (plus shipping and handling) for student members. Membership with online subscription to LT is now the same price as print subscription, and is also available to student members.

- Regular membership with print subscription:  
€68 / \$99 + shipping and handling
- Regular membership with online subscription:  
€68 / \$99, including back issues of the previous 13 years
- Student membership with print subscription:  
€43 / \$65 + shipping and handling
- Student membership with online subscription:  
€43 / \$65, including back issues of the previous 13 years