

## Oceania and the Pacific Rim linguistic area

In the 15 years since the first maps of numeral classifiers, head marking, and *n - m* personal pronouns were displayed to show a striking coast-hugging distribution of these features all around the Pacific Rim (PR), a number of additional similarly distributed features have appeared in the literature, but whether they can be considered to define a linguistic area remains controversial, in part because of their often weaker or at least more diffuse distribution in Oceania. Here we propose to settle the controversy by bringing together all known and some new PR features (now totaling 20), utilizing new statistical techniques, and accounting for the following perceived weaknesses in the theory of PR as a macroarea:

(1) Variance. Languages with PR features everywhere coexist with languages lacking them. Classical definitions of areality (Masica 1976, Campbell et al. 1986, Joseph 2001; survey: Enfield 2005:190) assume near-100% consistency, but in reality within-area variance in otherwise good areal features is a fact of life. We argue that if a feature is more common in an area than outside of it, and the difference is statistically significant, the feature is areal (Janssen et al. 2005). Variance is ancient and stable throughout the PR because the PR territory is almost entirely residual zone in the terms of Nichols 1992, and because the expansion of the languages bearing PR features involved movement into already inhabited lands so that PR features did not displace others but intermingled with them.

(2) Leakage. In certain places, PR features "escape" into the nearby (and not-so-nearby) interior: North America (head marking, syntactic noun incorporation, preposed verbal role agreement, obviation); Australia (reduplicated plurals); Eurasia (numeral classifiers, split intransitivity, several others); South America (where "PR" is a misnomer as there is almost never a discernible coastal cluster of PR features). We propose that leakage at these points is to be expected because it has clear historical motivations. Wherever a spread zone abuts the PR zone (North America, Australia, inner Eurasia) "escaped" features are likely to spread far; and the spread of domestication from Mesoamerica, a narrow strip with both Atlantic and Pacific coasts, impelled PR features eastward via the Caribbean coast.

(3) Greater variance and general diffuseness of PR features in Oceania. A number of PR features form notably denser clusters in the Americas than in Oceania. Rather than a problem, we see this as expected: Oceania has been inhabited longer than the Americas and domestication occurred earlier than in the Americas (Denham et al. 2003), so the land was already linguistically and demographically saturated when the PR expansion began. In saturated conditions, new linguistic features had less impact and took root less readily.

(4) Dependency among features. Improved definitions of some features (e.g. preposed vs. postposed role marking, index of synthesis) eliminate dependencies (in these cases with head marking). For the others, a feature that is dependent on another but cooccurs with it only in one area (e.g. syntactic incorporation and obviation, favored by head marking but in fact associated with head marking only in the PR) is an excellent diagnostic asymmetry.

(5) How could PR grammatical features persist so long in an area when there are many cases of loss within historically reconstructed language families that are younger than the PR? Rather than a shortcoming we see this as a defining property of diagnostic areal features: they are more persistent in areas than in families. This must be because their retention can be favored by areal pressure, and because in linguistic areas they are highly prone to be transmitted not only by inheritance but also by substratal retention and diffusion.

Thus the PR is a clear linguistic area defined by many independent features.

## References

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