

Conference Call for Papers

Descriptive grammars and typology: the challenges of writing grammars of underdescribed and endangered languages

University of Helsinki, 27–29 March, 2019

Over the last few decades, there has been a tremendous increase in the production of descriptive grammars for languages that had previously been poorly described or lacked description altogether. In most cases, these are minority languages, and many of them are endangered. The surge in descriptive projects has been accompanied by demand for advances in the art of grammaticography (see e.g. Ameka, Dench & Evans 2006). In this conference, we want to contribute to the development of grammaticography by bringing together linguists who are engaged in writing grammars of underdescribed and/or endangered languages and who are especially interested in utilizing concepts of linguistic typology in their descriptions. We encourage presentations concentrating on the description of specific grammatical structures, as well as wider discussion of the role of typology in grammar-writing. The presentations may take either a language-specific or a cross-linguistic perspective.

Topics relevant to the conference may include (but are not restricted to) the following issues:

- The challenges of describing a language in its own terms and, at the same time, making it comparable to other languages
- The roles of form and function in conceptualizing and organizing language descriptions
- Challenges of and approaches to describing rare structures
- The position of semantics in grammar writing
- Approaches to variation in language description
- The possibilities and challenges of multilectal grammars
- Methods for understanding and describing the influence of another language on the language under description
- The relation of language and linguistic structure to language ecologies
- The role of corpora in grammar writing
- Challenges and solutions for meeting the diverse needs of typologists, specialists with areal interests and specialists with specific theoretical interests when writing a descriptive grammar
- Challenges and solutions for meeting the diverse needs of linguists, language learners and native speakers when writing a descriptive grammar

Reference:

Ameka, F. K., Dench, A., Evans, N. (eds) 2006: *Catching Language. The Standing Challenge of Grammar Writing*. Trends in Linguistics 167. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Keynote speakers:

Pius Akumbu (University of Buea, Cameroon)

Diana Forker (University of Bamberg, Germany)

Juha Janhunen (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Joshua Wilbur (University of Freiburg, Germany)

On-line abstract submission:

EasyAbs: <http://linguistlist.org/easyabs/grammar2019>

Conference contact email:

grammarwriting2019@helsinki.fi

Conference web page:

<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/conferences/descriptive-grammars-and-typology>

Responsible organizer:

University of Helsinki / Finno-Ugrian Language Studies

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