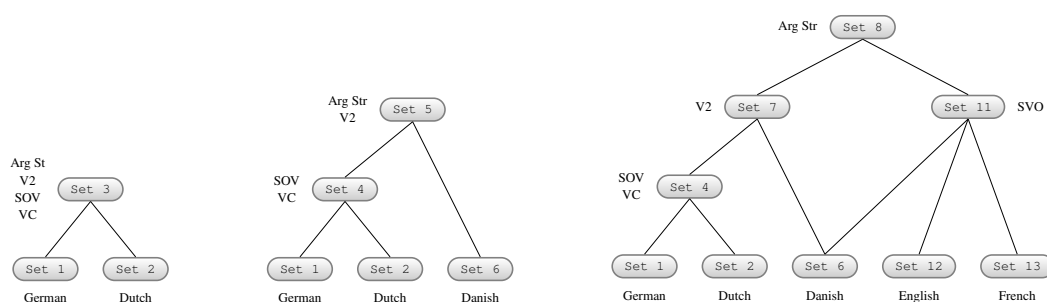


## Stefan Müller: The Methodology of the CoreGram Project

Haspelmath (2010), Dryer (1997), Croft (2001, Section 1.4.2–1.4.3), and others argue that descriptive categories should be language-specific, that is, the notion of *subject* for Tagalog is different from the one for English, the category *noun* in English is different from the category *noun* in Persian and so on.

We agree that the assumption of universal categories that are based on a few European languages is problematic, but do not draw as radical conclusions as the authors cited above. Instead we follow an approach that is similar to the generative approach but avoids its pitfalls. We develop grammars for languages that must be motivatable by language internal facts. This makes it possible to learn the respective grammars in an input driven way without the assumption of elaborate innate linguistic knowledge in the way it is assumed for instance by Cinque and Rizzi (2010). Our approach also excludes the assumption of phonologically empty expletives that are used by some authors working in GB/Minimalism to ensure uniformity of structures across languages.

We develop grammars for several languages and organize the respective constraints in sets. Constraints that are shared among two or more languages are represented in a set that is part of the complete grammars of the respective languages.



For instance Set 3 contains constraints that are shared between Dutch and German. Set 5 contains constraints that hold of German, Dutch and Danish. When working on new languages, we use the constraints from other languages if they are applicable. So, we do not follow the radical approach by Haspelmath and others in assuming that Danish and German nouns are radically different. Instead we use the same labels but employ additional features to account for the differences. On the other hand we do allow for new categories that do not correspond to the traditional ones. For instance, the Chinese grammar contains the part of speech *classifier*.

Haspelmath argued that a semantic definition of *dative* is useful for typological comparison. He sets this apart from language-specific definitions of dative or other cases, which may correspond to the semantically defined concept of dative or not. Our approach considers both syntactic and semantic properties of the languages under examination. Therefore the semantic information concerning role assignment to recipients, which Haspelmath considered relevant for the language independent terminology, is part of the constraint sets we arrive at with our method. Hence the respective typological generalizations and implications can be derived from the hierarchical organization of constraint sets as it is depicted above.

Croft (2009) argues against the generative method of examining „one language at a time“ on the basis of the failure of all claims connected to the Pro-Drop Parameter. We think that this failure was due to the bias on European languages. Croft refers to typological studies that were carried out by himself and that used samples of size 12. (Carefully constructed, balanced) samples of size 12 can be managed with the methodology described above and we expect to derive interesting typological generalizations without running into the problems of GB/Minimalist approaches. Since we treat languages independently and require language-internal motivation of the constraints we avoid the problem of ‘changing the hypothesis on the way’ that was pointed out by Croft in a discussion of Baker’s work.

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