

**Special issue: Morpho-syntactic isoglosses in Indo-European:
Diachrony, typology and linguistic areas**

**Guest-edited by Artemij Keidan, Leonid Kulikov
and Nikolaos Lavidas**

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MORPHOSYNTACTIC ISOGLOSSES IN INDO-EUROPEAN: AN INTRODUCTION

ARTEMIJ KEIDAN

Sapienza University of Rome
artemij.keidan@uniroma1.it)

LEONID KULIKOV

Ghent University
kulikovli@googlemail.com

NIKOLAOS LAVIDAS

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
nlavidas@enl.auth.gr

The last decades are marked with an increasing interest towards the study of isoglosses shared by some branches of the Indo-European language family. As is well-known, next to well-established branches such as Germanic, Greek or Indo-Iranian, there are larger subdivisions within Indo-European, grouping together several branches, in accordance with a number of features, traditionally called *isoglosses*. Such feature are shared by more than one group, or by several languages which do not belong to the same group (branch-crossing isoglosses). Such isoglosses have always been at the focus of vivid debates in Indo-European scholarship, giving rise to numerous hypotheses on early splits within Proto-Indo-European or, on the contrary, later contacts among historically attested languages. A systematic research of these issues still remains a desideratum.

Next to a few notorious isoglosses, almost exclusively limited to the phonological level, such as the *kentum/satəm* division,¹ or the ‘ruki’ division (retraction of the sibilant *s*), which have been known for about a century, there are a few less studied morpho-syntactic features, often of a much vaguer nature, that equally group together a number of branches and/or languages. One

¹ Cf. also Hopper’s (1981) *decem/taihun* division.

such isogloss is the past tense prefix **h₁e-* (known in Indo-European scholarship as “verbal augment”), found in Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Greek and Phrygian but not elsewhere (see e.g. Strunk 1992 [1994] and, most recently, De Decker 2016). Still less attention was paid to a number of in the domain of nominal morphology, such as isoglosses in the evolution of the PIE case system (for instance, the development of the new agglutinating cases in Indo-Iranian and Tocharian; see e.g. Masica 1991: 230ff.; Schmidt 1992: 43; Kulikov 2011 [2012]: 295ff.) or the emergence of a separate lexical class of adjectives (see Alfieri 2011). Isoglosses in the domain of verbal morphology and morpho-syntax include, in particular, the emergence of the infinitive form of the verb (see e.g. Zehnder 2016) and the two types of the evolution of transitivity oppositions: syncretic vs. antisyncretic type, roughly corresponding to the West/East division within Indo-European (see Kulikov 2009). Finally, isoglosses in the system of syntactic constructions include, above all, types of evolution (diachronic scenarios) of a variety of patterns reconstructable for Proto-Indo-European, such as constructions with non-canonical subjects (Barðdal and Smitherman 2009); or constructions with the polyptotic reciprocal form (**aljos ... aljom* [masculine] / **aljā ... aljām* [feminine] ‘one another’; see Kulikov 2014: 150–151).

There are three possible types of isoglosses, as far as their origin and nature are concerned.

- (1) Divergent isoglosses, originating from common innovations shared by a group of daughter languages (e.g. the *kentum/satəm* division).
- (2) Contact-induced convergent isoglosses, originating either from the mutual influence between daughter-languages of separate branches, or from a common substrate language influencing two or more recipients or substrate languages (see Kulikov 2011 [2012] on possible types of the evolution of the Proto-Indo-European case system caused, presumably, by the influence of substrate or adstrate languages).
- (3) Occasional convergent isoglosses, originating from random coincidences and common drifts due to universal tendencies operating within the phonological and morphological systems, e.g.: the palatalization of velars (attested in Indo-Aryan, as well as in Slavic, Germanic, Romance etc.), or the genitive-dative merger known as one of the constituent features of the Balkan Sprachbund, but also attested elsewhere, for example in the Middle-Iranian varieties.

Several attempts were made to plot IE isoglosses on the map (e.g., Anttila 1989: 305 and Figure 15-2). This task must be of fundamental importance for the progress of Indo-European linguistics: obviously, the more isoglosses we discover, the more complete our picture of early splits and linguistic areas within Indo-European becomes. A full catalogue of such isoglosses is a vibrant task which still awaits further research.

From the end of the last century onwards, Indo-European linguistics has increasingly concentrated on the typological evaluation of the reconstructed linguistic features of the proto-language and their diachronic development towards the reflexes attested in the daughter languages. See, in particular, in chronological order, Lehmann (1974), Kortlandt (1983), Hewson and Bubeník (1997), Comrie (1998), Bauer (2000), Watkins (2001), Jasanoff (2003), Haspelmath (2004), Barðdal et al. (2012), Barðdal and Smitherman (2013), to name just a few. In this perspective, isoglosses in general and convergent isoglosses, in particular, represent one of the most reliable tools for the analysis of the structure of Proto-Indo-European, its early and later dialectal split and its further evolution towards the actually attested Indo-European languages.

The topics listed above constitute the main content of the present Special Issue. This collection of articles originates from the Workshop “Morpho-syntactic isoglosses in Indo-European: Diachrony, typology and linguistic areas”, held on March 31, 2017 at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), arranged as a part of the 23rd International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics (ISTAL 23; see <http://www.enl.auth.gr/istal23/index.html>).

The papers collected in this issue deal with a variety of Indo-European languages and groups, focusing on a several aspects of PIE morpho-syntax and its development, such as anticausativization, the encoding of grammatical relations and oblique subject constructions (*Jóhanna Barðdal et al.*), parts of speech and their morpho-syntax (*Luca Alfieri*), head/dependency marking (*Artemij Keidan*), isoglosses defining linguistic areas and micro-areas (*Krzysztof Stroński and Saartje Verbeke*), and syntax of negative constructions (*Juan Briceño-Villalobos*).

The goal of this Special Issue is to collect contributions by scholars interested in a systematic study of Indo-European isoglosses and related issues, with special focus on the domain of morphology and syntax. This approach will eventually open new perspectives in the research of the Common Indo-European morpho-syntax and morpho-syntactic patterns as well as on the scenarios of their development in various branches and daughter languages.

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Address correspondence to:

Artemij Keidan
Sapienza University of Rome
Institute of the Oriental Studies
Circonvallazione Tiburtina 4
Roma, RM 00185
Italy
artemij.keidan@uniroma1.it