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HOW YOUNG IS STANDARD AVERAGE EUROPEAN?

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1. Standard Average European

The term *Standard Average European* was coined in 1939 by Benjamin Lee Whorf (cf. Whorf, 1956: 138) in order to highlight the radical differences between North American languages, in particular Hopi, and the familiar European languages. The notion of linguistic diversity of an educated Westerner, Whorf implies, pales in comparison with these enormous differences: the various European languages a non-anthropologist is likely to know hardly differ with respect to the linguistic features that Whorf examines.

Whorf was writing at a time when the radical otherness of “exotic” languages was being emphasized by many linguists and attempts were being made to understand each language “from within”, without recourse to comparison with others. It was thought that languages may differ from each other in unlimited ways, so that comparison of languages was in any case not an enterprise likely to be fruitful. The pendulum of the mainstream view in linguistics has meanwhile swung back, from the extreme particularism of the 1930s to the fairly strong universalism of our time (cf. Bossong (1992) for this back-and-forth movement in the history of linguistics). We no longer regard North American languages as fundamentally different from European languages (or from any other group of languages, for that matter), and we tend to emphasize the common traits of all human languages instead.

Given this new perspective and our much greater knowledge of the world’s languages in general, it is perhaps surprising that Whorf’s notion of Standard Average European (SAE) persisted. We know that many of his claims about Hopi were exaggerated and did not hold up to closer scrutiny (cf. Malotki, 1983; Pinker, 1994), so it seems that SAE might equally have been abandoned. However, the concept of SAE appears to be more alive than ever before, due in large measure to the European Science Foundation-sponsored EURO-TYP program devoted to the typological study of European languages (cf. Bechert *et al.* (eds.) (1990), van der Auwera (ed.) (1998), Feuillet (ed.) (1997), Dahl (ed.) (in press), and further volumes in preparation). As documented for instance in van der Auwera (1998) (see also Nichols, 1995), a sizable body of new comparative research on syntactic features of European languages supports the thesis that the core European languages show a fairly high degree of structural similarity. That is, languages such as French, German, Italian, English, as well as (to a lesser extent) Swedish, Polish and Modern Greek share a substantial number of

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structural features in their grammars which allows us to identify a European linguistic area which may conveniently be called "Standard Average European". SAE would thus be analogous to the well-known Balkan *Sprachbund*, except that it exists at a larger scale and shows a correspondingly smaller degree of absolute cohesion, although at the relevant scale it can be identified and delimited from non-SAE languages with no less certainty.

In Section 2 of this paper I will give more substance to this idea of a European *Sprachbund* by identifying and describing eleven salient syntactic features that are shared by the core European languages and that serve to distinguish Standard Average European from neighboring languages not belonging to the *Sprachbund*. Most of these features have been noticed previously, and Section 2 is largely a systematic summary of earlier research. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the juxtaposition of these features gives us a better starting point for discussing SAE than any other previous treatment.

Once the SAE *Sprachbund* has been established, the question arises as to the historical circumstances that brought it into existence. That is, what linguistic contacts created the surprisingly similar patterns that are found in SAE languages? And what is the source of the various characteristic features—who borrowed from whom? A full discussion of the sociohistorical, cultural and sociolinguistic issues could easily fill a monograph, so I will restrict myself here to mentioning just five possibilities:

- (i) retention of Proto-Indo-European structures and assimilation of some non-IE languages to IE language structure;
- (ii) influence from a common substratum of a pre-Indo-European population in Europe;
- (iii) contacts during the great transformations at the transition from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages in Europe;
- (iv) the official language (Latin) and the common European culture of the Middle Ages;
- (v) the common European culture of modern times, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment.

These are very broad options which need to be refined greatly before a satisfactory answer can be said to have been reached. However, even in this coarse-grained form, it is not obvious how the question should be answered. Of the five possibilities listed, only the fifth can be discarded from the outset. A time depth of 300–500 years is not sufficient to account for grammatical commonalities of the kind to be discussed below. If lexical similarities between the European languages are discussed—for instance neo-classical compounding (*socio-/paleo-/ortho-/demo-*, *-graphy/-logy/-cracy*, etc.) or idiomatic structure (e.g. *ivory tower/torre d'avorio/Elfenbeinturm*, *as poor as a church mouse/pauvre comme un rat d'église/arm wie eine Kirchenmaus*)—then the last several centuries are the appropriate time frame for explaining the historical links, but the basic syntactic structures common to SAE languages must be older.¹ Thus, in Sections 3 and 4 my task will be to find reasons for choosing among the four options (i–iv).

Before embarking on the description of the eleven features, I will briefly present my personal view of the composition of the SAE linguistic area, because there does not seem to be a broad consensus among researchers yet. I will distinguish a nucleus, a core and a periphery of the *Sprachbund*. It is of course possible to define these notions

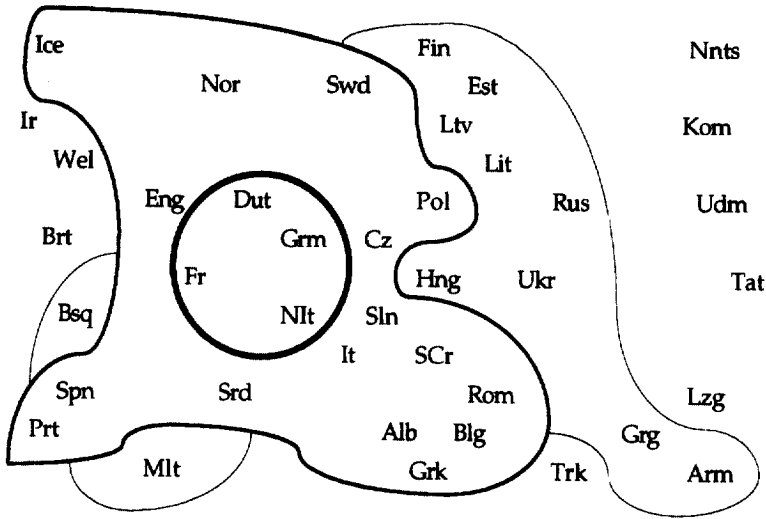


Fig. 1. Standard Average European (nucleus, core, periphery).

in a rigorous quantified manner along the lines of van der Auwera (1998), but for the purposes of this paper an impressionistic characterization must suffice (see Fig. 1). Like van der Auwera, I will take the nucleus of SAE to comprise Dutch, German, French, and northern Italian dialects (van der Auwera's *Charlemagne Sprachbund*).

The core in addition contains the other Romance and Germanic languages as well as the West and South Slavic and Balkan languages. The periphery consists of East Slavic, Baltic, Balto-Finnic and Hungarian, plus perhaps Basque, Maltese, Armenian and Georgian. Clearly outside SAE are the Celtic languages in the west and the Turkic, Abkhaz-Adyghean, Nakh-Daghestanian and eastern Uralic languages in the east of Europe.

There are two points in particular that need to be noted about this distribution. First, although there is some overlap, the SAE *Sprachbund* does not coincide with Indo-European. It is true that its nuclear and core languages all belong to the Indo-European family, but the same could be said of the Balkan *Sprachbund*, the classic example of a contact-induced linguistic area. The important point is that by no means all Indo-European languages belong to the SAE area. Not only the eastern languages of the Indic and Iranian subgroups are clearly outside SAE, but also the western Celtic family is not SAE.² Like the Balkan languages, the Indo-European SAE languages are clearly more similar to each other in the relevant respects than would be expected on the basis of their genetic relatedness. The SAE languages belong to no major genetic subdivision of Indo-European. On the contrary, Indo-Europeanists often assume a particularly close relationship between Italic and Celtic (sometimes even an Italo-Celtic proto-language), but Romance is in, while Celtic is out. And of course, the non-Indo-European languages Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian show many SAE features, making them typologically fairly different from other Finno-Ugrian languages.

The second point to note is that SAE does not coincide with the geographical extension of Europe—both in the west and in the east there are languages which are clearly

not SAE, and the peripheral SAE languages are found at the geographical periphery. This means that in principle it is sufficient to study the languages of Europe in order to identify an SAE feature, because the SAE/non-SAE contrasts can be observed within Europe. Of course, ideally we would have to study a representative sample of the world's languages in order to see whether a feature is characteristic of the European area. After all, it might turn out that a feature shared by SAE languages in contrast to Celtic and eastern European languages is in fact very widespread in the world, and the lack in Celtic and eastern Europe could be accidental. Employing this methodology consistently would require much more research, so at present we usually have to be content with systematic evidence from European languages (which is far more readily available) plus impressionistic assessments of the world-wide situation.

2. Eleven features of Standard Average European

2.1. *Definite and indefinite articles*

The first feature of SAE to be discussed here is definite and indefinite articles. They exist in all Romance and almost all Germanic languages plus some of the Balkan languages (Modern Greek, perhaps Albanian and Bulgarian), but not outside SAE. To be sure, their forms and syntactic behavior show considerable diversity (see Nocentini, 1996 for an overview), but their very existence is characteristic enough.

In large parts of eastern Europe there are no articles at all (East Slavic, West Slavic, Finno-Ugrian other than Hungarian, Turkic, Nakh-Daghestanian, Kartvelian). Some neighboring non-SAE languages do have definite articles (e.g. Celtic, Semitic, Abkhaz, Mordvin), and Turkish has an indefinite article, but no neighboring non-SAE language has both definite and indefinite articles. The only exception among Germanic languages, Icelandic (which only has definite articles like nearby Celtic), is also the most peripheral Germanic language geographically. World-wide, articles are not nearly as common as in Europe: According to Dryer's (1989: 85) findings, "it appears that about a third of the languages of the world employ articles" (125 out of a sample of about 400 languages). Only 31 languages of those in Dryer's sample (i.e. less than 8%) have both definite and indefinite articles. Furthermore, articles are clearly not a genetic feature of Indo-European (henceforth, IE), because Indo-Iranian languages have generally lacked articles throughout their history.

2.2. *Have-perfect*

Another well-known feature typical of SAE languages is the (transitive) perfect formed by 'have' plus a passive participle.³ Again, a perfect of this kind exists in all Romance and Germanic languages plus some of the Balkan languages (Albanian, Modern Greek),⁴ and also in Czech (Garvin 1949: 84). These perfects do not all mean the same thing, because they are at different stages in the grammaticalization process: in French and German, the perfect can be used as a normal perfective past, including the function of a narrative tense, while in Spanish, English and Swedish the perfect has a distinct present-anterior meaning. What is important here is that they all must have had basically the same meaning when they were first created. Dahl (1996: 365),

taking a global perspective, notes that the 'have'-perfect is almost exclusively found in Europe.

By contrast, in the Slavic and Finno-Ugrian languages and in Armenian the perfect is usually based on a participial construction with an active participle and a copula (e.g. Finnish *ole-n saa-nut* [be-1SG receive-PTCP] 'I have received'). Hungarian seems to lack a perfect completely. In some Nakh-Daghestanian languages (Lezgian and Godoberi), the perfect is formed on the basis of the past converb plus the copula. Georgian comes closest to the SAE prototype in that its transitive perfect is based on a passive participle, but this is combined with the copula rather than the transitive verb 'have', so that the perfect has a quasi-passive structure, with the agent in the dative case ('The letter is-written to-me', rather than 'I have-written the letter'). In Welsh, the perfect is formed with the preposition *wedi* 'after' ('She is after selling the house' for 'She has sold the house'). The eastern IE languages also lack a 'have'-perfect (for instance, both Persian and Hindi/Urdu have a perfect based on a participle plus the copula, somewhat like Slavic and Armenian).

The SAE 'have'-perfect is clearly related closely to the fact that these languages are peculiar in having a transitive verb of possession (cf. Dahl, 1990: 7), which in turn must be related to the common transitive structures of experiential verbs in SAE (cf. Lazard, 1990: 246–47), a point to which I will return in Section 2.5 below.

2.3. Participial passive

SAE languages typically have a canonical passive construction formed from a passive participle plus an intransitive copula-like verb ('be', 'become', or the like). In this passive the original direct object becomes the subject and the original subject may be omitted, but it may also be expressed as an adverbial agent phrase. Such constructions occur in all Romance and Germanic languages, but also in all Slavic (including East Slavic) languages. To be sure, there are many differences of detail among these languages, e.g. with respect to the distinction between actional and resultative passive, or the possibility of subjectless passives of intransitive verbs, but from a world-wide perspective the commonalities are much more striking. Thus, in Haspelmath (1990) I surveyed a world-wide sample of 80 languages and found that a passive exists only in the minority of the languages (31). Of these 31 languages, only four have a passive formed from a participle plus an intransitive auxiliary, and two of them are European languages (Latin and Danish). The most common formal type of passive is the stem suffix (found in 25 languages). Syntactically, the possibility of an adverbial agent phrase is also by no means universal, but it is characteristic of SAE languages (Lazard, 1990: 246).

No passives exist in Nakh-Daghestanian and in Hungarian, and passives of different formal types are found in Turkic, Georgian, Armenian and Modern Greek (stem suffix), in Basque, and in Celtic (cf. the Welsh 'get'-passive: 'Terry got his hitting by a snowball' for 'Terry was hit by a snowball'). Finnish and Irish have passives of a different syntactic type: In this construction, only the subject is backgrounded, while the direct object remains in its place (thus it is a *desubjective* rather than a *passive*, in the terminology proposed in Haspelmath, 1990).

It must be admitted that the SAE status of this feature is less evident than that of the first two features because the eastern IE languages also tend to have passives of

this type. In fact, in my 1990 study, the two non-European languages with participle-auxiliary passives were Baluchi (an Iranian language) and Maithili (an Indic language). Thus, one might say that this feature is an IE genetic feature. However, at least the Celtic languages and Armenian, two non-SAE branches of IE, do not have such passives, and Maltese is a non-IE language with such a passive (calqued from Italian).

2.4. Anticausative prominence

There are three ways in which languages can express inchoative-causative alternations such as 'get lost/lose', 'break (intr.)/break (tr.)', 'rise/raise'. One is by means of a causative derivation, i.e. a derived verb based on the inchoative member of the alternation, e.g. Mongolian *xajl-uul-* 'melt (tr.)', from *xajl-* 'melt (intr.)'. The second is by means of an anticausative derivation, i.e. a derived verb based on the causative member, e.g. Russian *izmenit'-sja* 'change (intr.)', from *izmenit'* 'change (tr.)'. (The third type, in which neither member is derived from the other, i.e. *non-directed* alternations, will not be considered further here.) In Haspelmath (1993), I examined 31 verb pairs in 21 languages and found that languages differ greatly in the way inchoative-causative pairs are expressed: Some languages are *anti-causative-prominent*, preferring anticausatives to causatives, while others are *causative-prominent*. It turns out that anticausative-prominence is a characteristic feature of SAE. In my sample, German, French, Romanian, Russian, Modern Greek and Lithuanian show the highest percentages of anticausative verb pairs (between 100% and 74% of all pairs that do not belong to the third, non-directed, type).

By contrast, Asian languages show much lower percentages of anticausatives, preferring causatives instead (e.g. Indonesian: 0%, Mongolian: 11%, Turkish: 34%, Hindi/Urdu 35%, Lezgian: 40%). An intermediate position is occupied by the Finno-Ugrian languages of eastern Europe (Finnish 47%, Udmurt 46%, Hungarian 44%) as well as Georgian (68%) and Armenian (65%). In a study involving more languages from Asia, Africa and Europe but less language-particular detail, Masica (1976) found a clear distinctive pattern for Europe: few causatives, heavy reliance on anticausatives (see especially his Maps 2 and 3). We still have no world-wide picture, but my impression is that the extreme rarity of causatives in Slavic, Germanic and Romance (my figures are between 100% and 91% for anticausatives) is indeed not often found in the languages of the world. And note especially the low figures of Hindi/Urdu, an eastern IE language, showing that anticausative prominence is not genetic.

2.5. Nominative experiencers

There are two ways of expressing experiencer arguments of verbs of sensation, emotion, cognition and perception: The experiencer may be assimilated to agents and coded as a nominative subject (e.g. *I like it*), or it may be assimilated to a patient or goal, so that the stimulus argument is coded as the nominative subject (e.g. *It pleases me*). In Bossong's (1997) typology, the first type is called *generalizing*, and the second type is called *inverting*. Bossong studies the expression of ten common experiential predicates in 40 European languages. He computes the relation between inverting predicates and generalizing predicates, arriving at figures between 0.0 for English (where all predicates are generalizing) and 5.0 for Lezgian (where all predicates are inverting). By

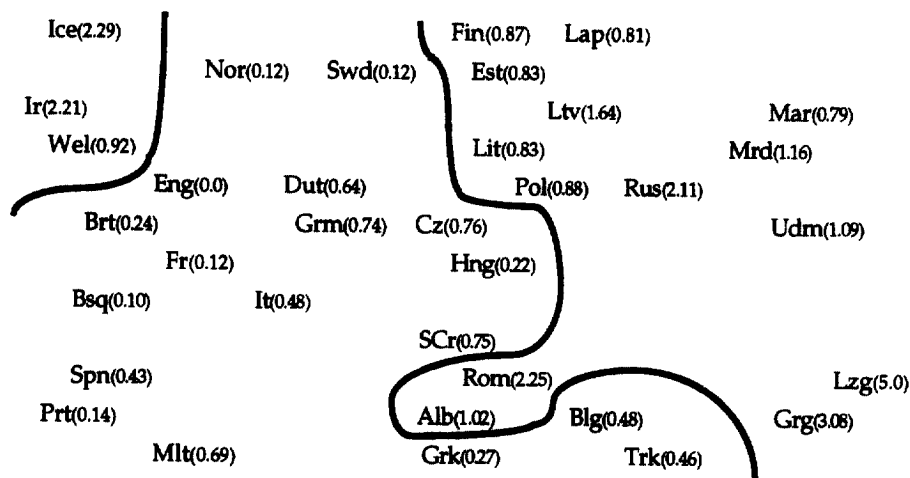


Fig. 2. Predominant generalization (center) vs. inversion (periphery).

arbitrarily dividing the languages into those showing predominant generalization (ratios between 0.0 and 0.8) and those showing predominant inversion (ratios between 0.8 and 5.0), we arrive at the geographical tripartition shown in Fig. 2.

Thus, Bossong's study basically confirms earlier claims (Lazard, 1990: 246–47; Dahl, 1990: 7) that the generalizing type is characteristic of SAE, although some of the figures are perhaps a bit surprising (e.g. the fact that Hungarian turns out to be more SAE than German or Dutch, and the inclusion of Turkish, but not Romanian or Albanian, with respect to this feature). It is not possible to explain everything here, but we evidently have before us a fairly typical SAE pattern with French and English at the center, Celtic (plus Icelandic this time) at the western margin, Balto-Slavic, Finno-Ugrian and Caucasian at the eastern margin, and fairly gradual transitions within the macro-areas. No systematic world-wide studies have been made, but at least the behavior of eastern Indo-European is fairly clear: Indic languages are well-known for their "dative subjects" of experienter verbs, so again the feature is not genetic (see also Masica (1976), especially Map 6, for the areal distribution of dative subjects in Eurasia and northern Africa).

2.6. Dative external possessors

In König and Haspelmath (1997), we studied the distribution of external possessors in thirty European languages. We found three main language types in Europe: (i) those with dative external possessors, e.g. German *Die Mutter wäscht dem Kind die Haare* 'The mother is washing the child's hair', (ii) those with locative external possessors, e.g. Swedish *Någon bröt armen på honom* 'Someone broke his arm (lit. on him)', and (iii) those that lack external possessors and must express possessors NP-internally, e.g. English. The SAE feature, external possessors in the dative, is found in Romance, Continental West Germanic, Balto-Slavic, Hungarian and Balkan languages (Greek,

Albanian). North Germanic and Balto-Finnic languages have locative external possessors, i.e. they are somewhat peripheral SAE languages with respect to this feature.

In the far west (Welsh, Breton, English) and in the southeast (Turkish, Lezgian) of Europe there are languages which do not have external possessors at all. The eastern IE languages Kurdish, Persian and Hindi/Urdu also belong to this type. Outside Europe a fourth type enjoys considerable popularity: the "relation-usurping" type, where the possessor "usurps" the syntactic relation of the possessum (e.g. in Chichewa, a Bantu language, 'The hyena ate the hare the fish' for 'The hyena ate the hare's fish'). This type is not found in Europe at all. Conversely, I know of no case of a dative external possessor outside Europe, so this is a very robust example of an SAE feature.

2.7. Negation and negative pronouns

The areal distribution of negation in Europe has been studied in detail by Bernini and Ramat (1996) (see also Ramat and Bernini, 1990). In this paper I will single out one aspect of negation, the cooccurrence of verbal negation with negative indefinite pronouns. I distinguish two main types: (i) V + NI (verb + negative indefinite), e.g. German *Niemand kommt* 'nobody comes', and (ii) NV + NI (negated verb + negative indefinite), e.g. Modern Greek *Kanénas dhen érxete* 'nobody (lit. not) comes'. A third, mixed type might be distinguished in which verbal negation co-occurs with negative indefinites only when the indefinite follows the verb but not when it precedes it, e.g. Italian *Nessuno viene* 'nobody comes', but *Non ho visto nessuno* 'Not I have seen nobody'. For our purposes we can classify this type as a subtype of (i), V + NI.

The Standard Average European type is V + NI (cf. Bernini and Ramat, 1996: 184; Haspelmath, 1997). It is found in French, Occitan and all Germanic languages, as well as (in the mixed variety) in Ibero- and Italo-Romance and Albanian (but not in Romanian or other Balkan languages). By contrast, all the eastern European languages (Balto-Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Turkic, Nakh-Daghestanian) with the exception of Georgian, and the Celtic languages in the west show the NV + NI type. This type is also that of the eastern IE languages (Iranian and Indic), as well as that of the clear majority of the world's languages: Kahrel (1996) has studied negation in a representative world-wide sample of 40 languages and found only five languages with V + NI negative patterns, one of which is the SAE language Dutch (the other four are Mangarayi (Australia), Evenki, Chukchi (Siberia), and Nama (southern Africa), as against 41 NV + NI patterns, and seven others. I found a very similar pattern in my (non-representative) sample of 40 languages (Haspelmath, 1997: 202).

2.8. Particle comparatives

Comparative constructions were investigated by Stassen (1985) in a world-wide study of 109 languages. Stassen distinguishes six main ways in which the standard of comparison may be expressed: Three kinds of locative comparatives ('bigger from X', 'bigger to X', 'bigger at X'), the exceed comparative ('Y is big exceeding X'), the conjoined comparative ('Y is big, X is little'), and the particle comparative ('bigger than X'). The particle in this latter type is often related to a relative pronoun (cf. English *than/that*, Latin *quam/qui*), and the case marking of the standard is not influenced by

the particle (so that it is possible to distinguish 'I love you more than she' from 'I love you more than her').

As Heine (1994) notes, the six types are not evenly distributed among the languages of the world. Of the 18 particle comparatives in Stassen's sample, 13 are in Europe, and of the 17 European languages in the sample, 13 have a particle comparative. The distribution within Europe again conforms to our expectations: Particle comparatives are found in Germanic, Romance, Balto-Slavic, the Balkans, Hungarian, Finnish and Basque, so this is the SAE type. The locative comparatives are all at the western fringe (Breton) or the eastern fringe of Europe (Finnish, Russian, Nenets, Ubykh, Turkish, Laz). The other two types do not exist at all in Europe—the exceed comparative is found particularly in Africa, and the conjoined comparative occurs only in the Americas and Oceania.⁵

2.9. *A-and-B* conjunction

The feature discussed in this section is less distinctive than the others mentioned so far, but I hope to show that it is not at all devoid of interest. Stassen (to appear) offers the first world-wide typological study of NP conjunction strategies, based on a sample of 260 languages. He distinguishes two basic types, *and*-languages (using a symmetric particle) and *with*-languages (using an asymmetric comitative marker). Two thirds of Stassen's sample languages are *and*-languages, and since SAE clearly belongs to this type, too, it is not a very distinctive property. *And*-languages cover all of northern Eurasia, South Asia, the Middle East and northern Africa, Australia, New Guinea, and parts of Central and South America. *With*-languages are encountered in sub-Saharan Africa, East and Southeast Asia, the islands of Oceania, and large areas of North and South America. However, within the *and*-languages there are several sub-types according to the position of the particle, which we may call "A and-B", "A-and B", "A-and B-and", and "A B-and" (of the remaining logical possibilities, "and-A B" seems to be nonexistent, and "and-A and-B" occurs only as a secondary pattern). Most European languages, and in particular all SAE languages, belong to the sub-type "A and-B". The types "A-and B-and" and "A-and B" are found in some languages of the Caucasus and in some Turkic languages, as well as scattered throughout northern Eurasia and South Asia (e.g. in Abkhaz, Archi, Persian, Sinhalese, Tamil, Burmese, Korean according to Stassen; Stassen also points out that there is a correlation with verb-final word order here). Furthermore, some peripheral European languages make restricted use of the *with*-strategy (e.g. Russian *my s toboj* 'I and you', lit. 'we with you', and also Old Irish, Lithuanian, Polish and Hungarian, according to Stassen). Taken together, these data do show that belonging to the "A and-B" type is not a trivial feature of the SAE linguistic area.

2.10. *Relative clauses*

The type of relative clause found in languages such as German, French or Russian seems to be unique to Standard Average European languages. It is characterized by the following four features: The relative clause is postnominal, there is an inflecting relative pronoun, this pronoun introduces the relative clause, and the relative pronoun functions as a resumptive, i.e. it signals the head's role within the relative clause (cf.

Lehmann, 1984: 103–109; Comrie, 1996: 23–24). In English, a relative construction like the *suspicious woman whom I described* also displays all these features. Furthermore, in most SAE languages the relative pronoun is based on an interrogative pronoun (this is true of all Romance, all Slavic and some Germanic languages, Modern Greek, as well as Hungarian and Georgian).⁶

The only other type that is widespread in Europe is the postnominal relative clause introduced by a relative particle (Lehmann, 1984: 85–87), which often occurs in the same language beside the resumptive relative pronoun type just described (an English example would be *the radio that I bought*). Particle relatives of this type exist in most Slavic and Romance languages, as well as in Scandinavian languages and Modern Greek, but also in Welsh and Irish (Lehmann, 1984: 88–90). The relative particle is sometimes difficult to distinguish from a degenerate resumptive pronoun, and in many European languages it developed from a relative pronoun through the gradual loss of inflectional distinctions. However, this also means that the relative clause loses its specifically European flavor, because particle relatives are also attested widely elsewhere in the world, (e.g. in Persian, Modern Hebrew, Nahuatl, Indonesian, Yoruba, and Thai, cf. Lehmann, 1984: 85–97).

2.11. *Verb fronting in polar questions*

In the large majority of languages, polar questions are marked by question intonation or an interrogative particle or both. In his sample of 79 languages, Ultan (1978) found only seven languages showing the alternative strategy of verb fronting (often called “subject-verb inversion”).⁷ Of these, six are European (English, French, Romanian, Russian, Hungarian, Finnish; the seventh language is Malay), so that the SAE status of verb fronting seems beyond doubt. In fact, the large majority of Germanic, Romance and Slavic languages (plus Modern Greek) appear to have verb fronting in polar questions in one form or another. The three European languages for which Ultan explicitly reports that no verb fronting occurs are peripheral: Basque, Gaelic and Lithuanian. Furthermore, SAE languages are characterized by the absence of an interrogative particle. In Ultan’s data, the nine European languages exhibiting a particle in polar questions are all peripheral to a greater or lesser extent: Basque, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Albanian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Russian, Finnish, Turkish (and I can add Nakh-Daghestanian).

The 11 features discussed in this section are of course not the only ones that may be proposed as characteristic for SAE. Some other candidate features are, for instance, SVO word order (contrasting with VSO in the west and SOV in the east), accusativity (contrasting with ergativity in Basque and in the Caucasus), WH-fronting in parametric questions, little use of non-finite verb forms in subordination, direct/indirect objects rather than primary/secondary objects, preponderance of dependent marking. One might also include negative features like the lack of an inclusive/exclusive distinction in first person pronouns, the lack of numeral classifiers, or the lack of tone (see Nichols, 1995 for the last four features). However, I have concentrated on the eleven features of this section because most other characteristics are either fairly widespread in the world’s languages (like many of the features just mentioned), or they are found in only a subset of SAE languages (e.g. the obligatoriness of personal pronouns even with verbs showing person agreement), or they are somewhat marginal in the grammar

(e.g. some of the features regarding adverbials in van der Auwera, 1997). But of course a great many additional aspects of grammar should be examined in future work, including phonological and lexical typology.

3. The ages of the 11 features

In order to understand the historical origin of the Standard Average European linguistic area, we first need a clear picture of the temporal distribution of SAE features. Fortunately, we know a great deal about earlier stages of many European languages, so for each of the eleven features we can say something about the time at which it came into existence. In particular, we can ask whether SAE features go back to Proto-Indo-European (PIE) or developed later.

Articles. It is a well-known fact that Old Indo-European lacked articles, with the remarkable exception of Ancient Greek (however, even in this language old poetic texts show very restricted use of articles). In virtually all SAE languages with sufficient documentation, we can observe the grammaticalization of definite and indefinite articles in the historical texts (cf. Nocentini, 1996 for an overview). In Finnish, a definite article is currently arising from a demonstrative pronoun.

Have-perfect. The 'have'-perfect did not exist in Old Indo-European. It arose in historical times before our eyes in the Romance and Germanic languages (cf. Jacob, 1994 for a recent discussion of Romance).

Participial passive. PIE seems to have had an inflected Middle, marked by specific person-number inflection, but there is no evidence for a special passive construction. The most likely hypothesis is that the Middle could be used as a passive in addition to its reflexive and other subject-affecting uses (cf. Delbrück, 1897: 432–33; Stefański, 1990). The Middle survived into the ancient forms of several European languages (Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Greek, Armenian), but the modern languages have largely lost it (exceptions are Greek and Albanian), creating new participial periphrases for the passive function, and grammaticalizing the reflexive pronoun to express reflexivity and various middle functions (and occasionally passive as well). A participial passive did exist already in Latin in perfective verb forms (e.g. *victus est* 'he has been defeated'), but it is doubtful whether this could have been the model for the later SAE passives because its tense value is quite different from that of the modern languages (Spanish *es vencido* means 'he is (being) defeated', contrasting with *fue vencido* 'he has been defeated').

Anticausatives. Some of the SAE anticausatives are very old, going back to the PIE Middle just mentioned (in Modern Greek and Albanian). But most are much younger, having been grammaticalized from the reflexive pronoun. This latter type exists in all Slavic and Romance languages, in North Germanic and in German (English is quite exceptional in this regard among the SAE languages). And if we consider an even greater time depth, it is clear that the high degree of anticausative prominence is an innovation that cannot go back to Proto-Indo-European. The proto-language had a productive strategy for forming causatives, remnants of which have survived even in the modern European languages, e.g. German *sinken/senken* 'sink (intr./tr.)', Russian *(za-)merznut'/(za-)morozit'* 'freeze (intr./tr.)'. The causatives exemplify the Proto-Indo-European causative formation *CoC-ey-, i.e. a root vowel *o* combined with a stem suffix *-ey-. This strategy has become unproductive in the western IE languages, and these

languages are now anticausative-prominent. The eastern languages, however, developed it further, resulting in numerous productive Hindi/Urdu causative pairs like, for instance, *khul-naa/khol-naa* 'open (intr./tr.)', *jal-naa/jal-aa-naa* 'burn (intr./tr.)'.

Nominative experiencers. The change from dative to nominative experiencers in the Middle Ages is documented particularly well for the Germanic languages (e.g. See-franz-Montag, 1983; Allen, 1995). For the other branches of Indo-European it is not quite so clear that the dative experiencer construction is necessarily the older one. (Thus, Latin and Ancient Greek were already fairly "nominative prominent": Bos-song's (1997) figures are 0.43 and 0.24, respectively. Greek even became somewhat less "nominative prominent" in the last two millennia.) However, in view of the clear evidence from Germanic and the overall confirmation of this tendency by Latin/Romance (where constructions like *pu-det me* 'I am ashamed, lit. it shames me' disappeared at a certain stage), and given the fact that dative experiencers abound in eastern IE, I think it is fair to assume that the nominative experiencers constitute an innovation.

Dative external possessor. This feature is the only one of those considered here that seems to have an impeccable Proto-Indo-European ancestry: according to Havers (1911), the dative external possessor (called "sympathetic dative" by Havers) can be found in virtually all ancient Indo-European languages, notably Old Indic, Old Iranian, Homeric Greek, Latin, Gothic and Old Church Slavonic. Right from the beginning its attestation in the eastern languages appears to be noticeably weaker than in the western languages, a trend that continued through the millennia, resulting in the current situation with dative possessors being widespread in Europe, but absent in eastern Indo-European.

Negation and negative pronouns. The V + NI pattern of negative indefinites (i.e. indefinites without verbal negation) in Germanic and nuclear SAE Romance is due to the previous occurrence of a change called Jespersen's Cycle, by which the erstwhile verbal negation lost its negative force and disappeared from the language (Bernini and Ramat, 1996: 181–88; Haspelmath, 1997: 203–205). In sentences with negative indefinites, these were thus left to signal negation by themselves (e.g. Middle High German *ich en tuon nichts* > Modern German *ich tue nichts*). Thus, this source of the V + NI pattern is clearly very young. However, the southern Romance languages and Albanian also show the V + NI pattern, at least with preverbal negative indefinites, and these languages did not undergo Jespersen's Cycle. In the Romance languages, the V + NI pattern seems to be a continuation of the Latin V + NI pattern (cf. Posner 1984), and it is difficult to assess the age of this Latin pattern. Negative indefinite constructions seem to be subject to fairly rapid change, so we have no secure way of reconstructing a PIE pattern. At the same time, the quick pace of change in negative patterns makes it unlikely that the V + NI pattern in Latin is very old (see Haspelmath, 1997: 203 on the dispreferred status of this construction).⁸

Particle comparatives. The old Indo-European pattern of forming a comparative construction is not the particle comparative, but the locative-separative comparative (Ablative case, sometimes replaced by related case forms). This is found in Vedic Sanskrit (*manaso javīyān* [thought.ABL swifter] 'swifter than thought'), in Old Iranian, in Homeric Greek (*seū philteros* 'dearer than you'), in Latin (*te major* 'bigger than you'), in Slavic (Russian *vyšē menja* 'taller than I.GEN') and in Gothic (*maiza immo* 'bigger than he.DAT') (cf. Delbrück, 1893: 216–17; Andersen, 1983). This pattern is gradually giving way to the particle comparative, which coexists with the earlier locative com-

parative in several languages (e.g. Latin *major quam tu* 'bigger than you', Gothic *þau*, Greek *ἔ/*). Thus, the particle comparative does not seem to go back to PIE, but developed later and especially in the European languages.

A-and-B conjunction. The conjunction pattern that can be reconstructed for PIE is *and*-coordination of the type "A-and B-and" or "A B-and". The coordinating particle can be reconstructed as **-k^we* (e.g. Latin *Senatus populus-que* 'the Senate and the people', Homeric Greek *te*, Gothic *-(u)h*, Old Indic *-ca*). This pattern was later replaced by "A and-B", but none of the new coordinating particles have a good PIE etymology (e.g. Latin *et*, Greek *kai*, Slavic *i*, Old English *and*), so it is clear that this is the younger construction which was developed after the breakup of IE unity (cf. W. Lehmann, 1974: 160; Delbrück, 1897: 512–19). Again, the SAE pattern is not the PIE pattern.

Relative clauses. Reconstructing a PIE relative clause pattern is difficult because neither the relative pronouns nor the syntactic constructions of the oldest daughter languages are sufficiently similar (cf. C. Lehmann, 1979; Kurzová, 1981 for discussion). However, C. Lehmann (1979) argues in detail and persuasively that the Classical Latin relative clause, which represents the SAE pattern rather well, results from a fairly radical restructuring of a late Indo-European pattern shared with Hittite which involved preposing and an internal head accompanied by the relative pronoun (this latter type is still found in Old Latin and in modern Indic languages). Thus, once more the SAE pattern is quite different from the old Indo-European pattern.

Verb fronting. I know of no previous comparative study of verb fronting in interrogative clauses, so I cannot say much regarding the age of this SAE feature. It appears, though, that it is unattested in old Indo-European languages, where word order variation was not generally used for syntactic purposes. Verb fronting has been discussed particularly in the Germanic languages in connection with the verb-second phenomenon and the subordinate/main word order contrast found in some languages of this family. It might be proposed that verb fronting spread to neighboring languages from Germanic, but this could hardly account for verb fronting in remote languages like Tsakonian Greek (e.g. *ési šoñixu* 'you are heating', *šoñixur ési?* 'are you heating?'). W. Lehmann (1974: 101) notes that some Old Indo-European languages had question particles (e.g. Latin *-ne*, *num*, Ancient Greek *ἔ*), while their modern European descendants lost the particles (except for some Slavic languages near the periphery of SAE). However, no question particle can be reconstructed for PIE. Nevertheless, the little evidence that we have for this SAE feature seems to conform to the overall pattern that SAE features are innovations with respect to PIE.

4. Tentative conclusions

It is in the nature of this short article and the vastness of the issues that my conclusions can only be tentative and raise more questions than they answer. Nevertheless, I believe that we have learned a few things from the survey of eleven SAE features and their diachrony in the preceding two sections.

First of all, it is quite clear that option (i) of Section 1, retention of PIE structures (which would be the null hypothesis), cannot be the source of the SAE features. Of the eleven features, ten are innovations with respect to PIE and appear before our

eyes in historical times—only dative possessors probably existed in Proto-Indo-European.⁹ Some of the innovative structures began replacing the PIE structures already in the first millennium BC (particle comparatives, A-and-B conjunction, relative clauses), while others are clearly later developments of the first millennium AD or even the later Middle Ages (articles, 'have'-perfect, most participial passives and anticausatives, most V + NI structures, most nominative experiencers). Thus, Indo-European SAE languages must have developed their special characteristics long after the breakup of the Proto-Indo-European proto-language, at a time when they were already spoken in Europe.

Second, the idea of a pre-IE substratum in Europe causing the SAE features (option (ii) of Section 1) must probably be given up, too. But let me first say why this hypothesis might be attractive at all. Intriguingly, the geographical space occupied by SAE languages coincides fairly precisely with the area of the Old European hydronymy, i.e. the homogeneous layer of river names discovered by Hans Krahe (see Vennemann, 1994 for recent discussion). Vennemann (1994) proposes that these Old European hydronyms were not coined by an early prehistoric Indo-European population, but by a pre-IE people which he calls Vasconic (the only surviving Vasconic language being Basque). Furthermore, the Old European hydronymy is hardly attested on the British Isles, where the Celtic languages are spoken, i.e. they could not have been influenced by the Vasconic substratum. This is in perfect harmony with the well-motivated hypothesis that the Celtic languages acquired some of their striking features from a different substratum related to the Afro-Asiatic languages (Pokorny, 1927–30). Vennemann (1995) explicitly suggests that the Vasconic and "Atlantic" (= Afro-Asiatic-related) substrata are responsible for some European *Sprachbund* phenomena of historical times. (However, the only grammatical features he mentions as being due to substratum are word-initial stress in early Germanic, Italic and Celtic, as well as a vigesimal numeral system.) Another author who attributes European areal features to substratum influence is Nichols (1995). She claims that synchronic structural comparison "can reveal a panchronic, mostly pre-Indo-European Europe which even today, after three or four millennia of Indo-European cultural and linguistic dominance, is more European than Indo-European". Nichols's methodology is to extrapolate from typological and geographical patterns even where no historical evidence is available. She identifies four successive "typological strata": Old European, immediate pre-Indo-European (including Basque), Indo-European, and post-Indo-European (i.e. Finno-Ugrian and Turkic). The typological characteristics associated with SAE are mostly attributed to the Old European type by Nichols, which would presumably be "pre-Vasconic" (given that she associates Basque with the second stratum). In this way she avoids the paradox of linking (Proto-) Basque with SAE, because typologically Basque is quite divergent from SAE in most respects and those features that it shares with SAE are clearly later borrowings from neighboring IE languages. (However, the identification of Nichols's layer of "Old European" requires a large measure of bold speculation.)

The main argument against the substratum view is that the SAE features seem to be gaining ground too late for a pre-IE substratum to have caused them. Some SAE features appear only in the first millennium AD, but also the earlier features usually come fairly late, so that the earliest records of European IE languages still show traces of the PIE patterns (e.g. causatives, relative clauses, locative compara-

tive, A-B-and-conjunction). If these SAE features were caused by a substratum, then we should have much more evidence of the population speaking this substratum language.¹⁰ Another problem with the substratum view is that it seems to be incompatible with the plausible scenario of Renfrew (1987), who identifies the spread of Indo-Europeans with the first introduction of a farming economy to Europe. Renfrew argues that a large-scale migration like the spread of Indo-Europeans, who came to occupy most of Europe superseding almost all the previous peoples, can only be understood if their economic basis was far superior to that of the autochthonous population so that they outnumbered these Proto-Europeans by far. If this was the case, however, then the substratum population could not have left such a strong imprint on the conquerors' language.

Of the remaining two possibilities, we can probably exclude option (iv) (the influence of Latin in the Middle Ages), because most SAE features were absent in Latin and developed only in the Romance languages. There are only two features for which Latin influence is a likely factor: negation and relative pronouns. In the case of these two features, the standard languages sometimes show deviations from the vernacular dialects, so at least the written standard languages may have been influenced by Latin, the European written language par excellence for many centuries. Thus, non-standard English has constructions like *I won't do nothing* ('I won't do anything'), and similarly in non-standard German and French (cf. Haspelmath, 1997: 205). Analogously, Latin-type resumptive relative pronouns occur widely in the standard languages of Europe, but vernacular speech often prefers relative particles (C. Lehmann, 1984: 88, 109). However, Latin probably only helped reinforce these structures in those languages where they existed already independently as variants.

Thus, we are left with option (iii), the time of the great migrations at the transition between antiquity and the Middle Ages. This seems to be the appropriate time frame at least for articles, the 'have'-perfect, the participial passive, anticausatives, negative indefinites, nominative experiencers and verb fronting. The rise of these constructions can be observed only with difficulty because they were by and large absent in the written classical languages but seem to be well in place once the vernacular languages appear in the written record toward the end of the first millennium AD.¹¹ This hypothesis derives some further plausibility from the fact that language contact must have been particularly intensive and effective during the great migrations, and in the case of French and northern Italian we have ample records of the lexical effects of these contacts. However, it is not so easy to fit the three features of particle comparatives, A-and-B conjunction and resumptive relative pronouns into this picture, because these features seem to have developed around the middle of the first millennium BC or even earlier. Of course, we must always reckon with the possibility (or even likelihood) that different SAE features are due to different historical circumstances, and the correct picture is likely to be much more complicated than we can imagine at the moment, let alone discuss in this contribution.

Nevertheless, I hope to have shown in this paper that by examining carefully the various features characteristic of SAE and their distribution in space and time, we can come closer to an understanding of the historical causes of the linguistic convergence, even though we still have a long way to go.

NOTES

¹ To be sure, there are also some common European lexical structures that go back to the Middle Ages, e.g. loan translations like German *Ge-wissen*, Russian *so-vest'*, Latin *con-scientia* (from Greek *syn-eidesis*), or idioms like *pay court/fare la corte/den Hof machen* (cf. Ramat, 1993: 6–10), but these are far less numerous than the later lexical parallels, and they do not match the fundamental structural similarities of the SAE languages.

² Here I differ from Ramat (1993: 6), who concedes marginal SAE status to Celtic. It is my impression that Hungarian and Finnish (as well as probably Basque and Maltese) share more SAE features than the Celtic languages, though this has to be verified in a larger systematic study.

³ The perfect of intransitive verbs is sometimes formed with 'be'—SAE languages vary in this respect.

⁴ In Modern Greek, it is not the passive participle but a special periphrasis form that is combined with *éxo* 'have'.

⁵ Equative comparison ('as big as X') also provides clear evidence for SAE, cf. Haspelmath and Buchholz (1998).

⁶ Languages like German, whose relative pronoun is based on a demonstrative, or Finnish, which has a special relative pronoun, are not common.

⁷ Word order changes are also common in parametric ("WH-") questions, but here they are mainly due to the fronting of the WH-phrase. This fronting is much more common than verb preposing and is by no means restricted to European languages.

⁸ Another interesting point that is perhaps relevant to this issue is the fact that negative indefinites consisting of an indefinite and a negative scalar focus particle ('not even, nor', e.g. Russian *ni-któ* 'nobody', *ni* 'not even, nor') seem to be characteristic of European languages and are rarely found outside Europe (Haspelmath, 1997: 222–23). However, there is no direct connection with the V + NI pattern (for instance, Russian uses the NV + NI pattern).

⁹ Nichols (1995) considers a different set of features (though there is some limited overlap) to characterize "the western European and Balkan structural type" (i.e. SAE) and arrives at the same conclusion: "These are features that recur around the western and southern periphery of Europe and represent parallel shifts away from the inherited Indo-European structural mold".

¹⁰ In the case of Celtic, by contrast, substratum influence is much more plausible because the specific Celtic features appear in the Celtic languages from the beginning of our records, so the effect of the substratum can be very old.

¹¹ This is in partial agreement with Fehling (1980), who draws attention to a number of shared syntactic features of European languages which contrast with the classical languages. Fehling attributes these to late (or Biblical) Latin influence. (However, one needs to be skeptical of his attempts to trace many of these features, e.g. the definite article and an allative-dative preposition, to the languages of the ancient Near East—many of these features are widespread in the world's languages, a fact of which Fehling seems to be unaware.)

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