Language Types

It is difficult to find universal qualities of all languages, as the languages are so much different. Anyway, there are some features that are common to some groups of languages at least. Therefore **linguistic typology** has arisen and the interest in so-called implicational universals appeared. **Implicational universals** and implicational tendencies reveal the fact that, if a language has a particular construction, it tends to have further predictable characteristics.

Linguistic typology basically offers two different criteria for language classification: Morphological criteria and word order criteria.
Morphological criteria: As the number of morphemes per word and the way in which the morphemes are combined together vary from language to language, we can distinguish three different **morphological types** of languages:
Isolating (or analytical) – Languages of this type mostly use words containing only one morpheme. English language can serve as an example: *Could you please walk the dog now?*
Agglutinating (´glue´ in Latin means ´together´) – Words in these languages can be easily divided into several morphemes. E.g. Swahili, Turkish, and Czech: *od-prac-ova-t*. English language is agglutinating to a limited extent: *pre-teach-ing*, *wire-less*.
Fusional – These languages fuse (join) the morphemes together in a way that it is not easy to recognize or separate them. E.g. Latin: *Sagitarius –us* at the end fuses three functions. It is masculine, singular, and the subject of the sentence. Rare examples of fusion occur in English, too: *went* = go+past tense.
As you can see from the examples mentioned above, no language is a ´pure´ morphological type. They may fit more to one category than to the other. That is why there is another possibility to categorize languages:
Word order criteria:
When we consider word order, we can divide the languages into two groups: configurational and non-configurational languages.
Configurational languages. These languages use word order as a basic syntactic device. E.g. English. The position of the word in a sentence signals syntactic functions. Thanks to this fact each position has certain predictable characteristics. The noun in the first place in a sentence has usually the function of a subject. The noun used later is usually an object. Subject – verb – object is the most usual order (SVO). There are five more possibilities: SOV, VSO, VOS, OVS, OSV. In practice the combinations with a subject first are more common in languages, than combinations with a verb first, and combinations with an object starting a sentence occur rarely. SVO is typical in English. E.g.: *The cat ate the mouse*. German has SVO in main sentences and SOV in subordinate clauses. Turkish can be a representative of SOV type.
SVO languages are likely to have auxiliaries in front of the verb, prepositions rather than postpositions, and genitives following the noun.
SOV languages tend to have auxiliary verbs after the verb, postpositions rather than prepositions, and genitives preceding the noun.
Non-configurational languages. Non-configurational languages use extremely free and flexible word order. E.g.Czech. Thanks to endings we can identify whether the noun is a subject or an object. *Kočka sledovala sýkorku ve větvích. Sýkorku ve větvích sledovala kočka. Ve větvích sledovala sýkorku kočka.*
Beside the two main groups we can also find so-called **pro-drop languages**. These are languages that can omit pronouns standing on the position of a subject. E.g. Latin – *cano* (= I

sing), or Czech zpívám (= I sing). If the subject pronoun is used then it brings extra emphasis: *ego cano, já zpívám*.
Anyway, languages are inconsistent and there are very few languages, which are ´pure´ types. Therefore **doublets** appear. E.g.: *my friend's brother, brother of my friend*.
On the other hand different linguistic categories (nouns, verbs and prepositions), all behave somewhat similarly to another. In English for example: prepositions take their place in front of the phrase, *on the front table*, adjectives precede the nouns, *a big black mat*. This fact can help in historical linguistics when we need to decode or reconstruct old texts.