

The ListTyp Database

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Abstract

English. The paper describes the aim and structure of a new freely accessible resource – *ListTyp: A typological database of listing patterns* – with a focus on methodological aspects, encoded information and search functions.

Italiano. *L'articolo descrive le finalità e la struttura di una nuova risorsa liberamente consultabile – ListTyp: A typological database of listing patterns – focalizzandosi su aspetti metodologici, informazioni codificate e funzioni di ricerca.*

1 Listing Patterns and Typology

Typological investigation is challenging in its own right, let alone when it tackles ‘untraditional’ categories, namely (newly-established) categories that are not part of the stock of customary, long-established concepts for linguistic description, hence not usually described in grammars, at all or as such. ‘Lists’ belong to this class.

Lists are traditionally associated with spoken language and interaction (see, among many others, Blanche-Benveniste (1990), Jefferson (1990), Selting (2007)). However, a broader approach has been proposed by Masini et al. (2018), who define ‘lists’ as syntagmatic concatenations of two or more units of the same type (potentially paradigmatically connected) that fill one and the same slot within the larger construction they are part of. This abstract definition embraces linguistic phenomena normally ascribed to different levels (morphology, syntax, discourse). ‘Lists’, or ‘listing patterns’ (LPs), thus encompass syntactic and discourse structures like coordination (e.g. *The*

system allows gas, electricity and water meters to be read [British National Corpus]), reformulation (e.g. *They now had lifts, or rather elevators* [British National Corpus]) or repetition (e.g. *Some people are very very very touchy* [British National Corpus]), but also lexical and morphological phenomena like irreversible binomials (e.g. *alive and kicking*), (co)-compounding (e.g. Chuvash *sět-sú* lit. milk-butter ‘dairy products’, Wälchli (2005), p. 138) and full reduplication (e.g. Sundanese *hayan-hayan* lit. RED-want ‘want very much’, Moravcsik (1978), p. 321). Although these phenomena have their own specific properties (displaying different degrees of complexity, cohesion and conventionalization), lumping them together may unveil interesting (cross-linguistic) structural and functional tendencies and help bridging the gap between discourse and grammar.

Attempting a typological study of LPs is not trivial and raises methodological issues. Data are available for some widely described LPs (e.g. coordination, reduplication, co-compounding), but other types of LPs are far from simple to find in descriptive grammars, which usually (and understandably) focus on long-established categories in phonetics, morphology and syntax (leaving often aside, e.g., syntax beyond the clause and discourse phenomena). The same applies to typological databases. Hence, doing typology in the ‘traditional’ way turns out to be hard, and a new integrated methodology for carving out the required data is needed (Masini and Mattiola, 2019).

1.1 A Three-Level Methodology

The ListTyp database embodies this new methodology, which consists of three levels complementing each other (and running partially in parallel), encompassing both horizontal and vertical dimensions of investigation.

Firstly, a traditional large-scale examination of descriptive grammars is pivotal. For this first level

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(**Level 1: horizontal**), a ‘variety sample’ (Miestamo et al., 2016) represents the best option.¹ This sample should be as large as possible (ideally 400-500 languages) to let the widest variety emerge. To this end, we have specifically created a sample of 424 languages (including isolate languages, pidgins/creoles and sign languages), following the Diversity Value technique with Ethnologue’s 2018² genetic classification, which has proven to be the most reliable (Miestamo et al., 2016). Descriptive grammars for these languages were selected according to criteria such as: (i) exhaustivity (in terms of contents); (ii) searchability (digital edition); (iii) presence of (possibly glossed) texts; (iv) recentness. In order to facilitate the (time-consuming) process of data gathering, we subsequently created, from this larger sample, a smaller sample of 223 languages (with its own internal cohesion, based on the same ‘variety’ principles), which is what we are currently using to populate the database (cf. Mattiola (2020) for more details). Level 1 aims at achieving a preliminary survey of how languages work, but it merely scratches the surface: the general ‘imperfections’ of large-scale typology are made worse by the ‘untraditional category’ status of LPs, thus calling for other layers of investigation.

Secondly, a qualitative analysis of corpora and texts (e.g. texts at the end of descriptive grammars, free corpora, corpora made available by fieldworkers, etc.) is particularly useful to detect naturally occurring lists that are hard to be found in descriptive grammars used for Level 1. Needless to say, corpora of spoken language are especially useful for our current purposes. For this second level (**Level 2: intermediate**), the (convenience) sample is necessarily much smaller (ideally 20-30 languages). Level 2 maximizes the possibility to find discourse-level data (not necessarily described within the grammar) and allows to get over the problems of ‘traditional’ typology by verifying directly in a (albeit small) corpus data that the horizontal level did not bring out.

The third level, connected to the second, consists in a more quantitatively-oriented analysis of larger (possibly annotated) corpora of few (2-5) selected languages, which would provide enough data to draw some generalizations. Corpora might

be either manually scrutinized (entirely or partially) or searched automatically through specific queries (depending on corpus annotation and size). The outputs of automatic searches are subsequently processed and checked manually. This level (**Level 3: vertical**) represents language-specific investigations that allow to study lists in much greater detail and to detect properties and constructions that more traditional methods might not be able to bring to light, as well as similarities between ‘distant’ languages.

The idea behind this three-level methodology is that combining data from different sources and extraction techniques not only enriches our database with new occurrences, but also contributes to unveil new patterns and to spot previously unexpected cross-linguistic correspondences. We believe that the very same methodology might be fruitfully applied to the typological investigation of other linguistic phenomena. At a more advanced stage of the project, we will also consider crowdsourcing as a collection technique, especially for underrepresented languages.

2 ListTyp Contents

ListTyp is an ongoing project: at present, the database is still only partially populated – counting **1685** examples of LPs from **156** languages – although its architecture is complete and freely available online: <https://listtyp.it/>.

The database is made of three main datasets (Dataset A, Dataset B, Dataset C) plus a supplement (Dataset D), each of which is partially independent, although they obviously concur to create the whole resource. Searches may be run on a single dataset or on the whole database.

Datasets A, B and C coincide with the three levels described in Subsection 1.1. They share the same architecture in terms of annotated properties and search criteria. However, they were gathered following (partially) different methodologies, which resulted in (partially) different sets of data, that are not directly comparable.

2.1 Dataset A

Dataset A is the result of Level 1 in our methodology, based on a large sample of typologically different languages. Hence, it represents the most ‘typological’ part of our database. Dataset A is being populated following the 223-language sample mentioned in Subsection 1.1 and currently con-

¹A variety sample does not represent a balanced picture of the world’s languages. Rather, it captures the broadest possible variation in order to maximize linguistic diversity.

²<https://www.ethnologue.com/>

tains 769 examples of LPs belonging to 152 languages. See the following example from Atayal: *musa' magaN qsinuw, ini' ga' piku' ru' ini' ga' bzwaq ru' ini' ga' yapit ga'* lit. ACT-go ACT-take animal NEG GA' squirrel and NEG GA' wild-pig and NEG GA' flying-squirrel GA' '(He) went to hunt animals: either squirrels, or wild pigs, or flying squirrels' (cf. Rau (1992), p. 188).

2.2 Dataset B

Dataset B is the result of Level 2 in our methodology, based on a much smaller sample of typologically different languages, which are analyzed through small-size (glossed) texts. The sample for this dataset is still undefined and is being built incrementally on the basis of availability. Languages to be included in Dataset B preferentially do not coincide with those included in Dataset A, but not necessarily. At present, Dataset B contains 72 examples of LPs from one language (Napoletano-Calabrese, Cilentan variety), extracted from a spoken corpus (e.g. *era tandu bella e tandu bella* '(She) was so nice and so nice').

2.3 Dataset C

Dataset C is the result of Level 3 in our methodology, based on few languages, which are however analyzed in a more thorough way using larger corpora. At present, Dataset C contains 661 occurrences from one language (Italian), taken from the spoken corpus LIP (De Mauro et al., 1993) (e.g. *è lui che organizza l'estorsioni le rapine i sequestri eccetera eccetera* 'He is the one who organizes extortion, robberies, kidnappings etcetera etcetera'). Further data from (spoken and written) Italian are being processed for inclusion in the database.

2.4 Dataset D: Supplement

The addition of a fourth dataset was necessary to document sparse examples collected in various ways by the ListTyp team and their students or other colleagues connected to the project. This supplement was therefore created without following any specific criterion, with the sole objective of enriching the resource. At present, Dataset D contains 183 lists (from written Italian, Russian and Spanish) connected to the COVID pandemic and manually gathered from Facebook (e.g. *No se van a controlar fiestas reuniones bares discotecas aforos* 'No control of parties, meetings, bars, discotheques, capacity will be carried out').

3 ListTyp Design

ListTyp is a web-based relational database containing a large number of parameters. Data, extracted with the different methods described in Subsection 1.1, were manually annotated by data collectors (whose contribution is acknowledged on the database website) under the supervision of the project directors.

3.1 Parameters

The main parameters, to be visualized on the 'Examples' webpage as a grid, include:

- *Language*: the name of the language according to Ethnologue (e.g. 'Tamasheq').
- *Source*: the type of source the example comes from (descriptive grammar, corpus, elicitation, web, social network, etc.).
- *Example*: the example as it appears in the original source (with no adjustments).
- *Glosses*: if the example was glossed in the original source, the original glosses are provided (with no adjustments, in most cases), otherwise they are added (in English) by the data collector.
- *Translation*: if the example was translated in the original source, the original translation is provided (with no adjustments)³, otherwise it is added (in English) by the data collector.
- *Schema*: the abstract structural skeleton of the example (e.g. the schema for example *lifts, or rather elevators* would be 'X or Y').
- *Construction*: the grammatical phenomenon to which the example can be traced back, based on the commentary provided by the grammarian or the intuition of the field-worker or data collector, despite the proliferation of terms this may entail. At present, ListTyp counts 13 values for this parameter⁴, although the vast majority of examples are annotated as Coordination, Juxtaposition and Reduplication/repetition.

³Translations are mostly in English but also in other languages like French or Spanish.

⁴The values are: Alternative interrogatives; Compounding; Complex compounding; Compounding; Contrastive marker; Coordination; Coordination/list; Juxtaposition; List; Partial repetition list; Reduplication/repetition; Reformulation, Self-repair.

- *Function*: the function conveyed by the example based, again, on the commentary/translation provided by the grammarian or the intuition of the fieldworker or data collector. Here the proliferation of values is even more marked than for the ‘Construction’ parameter, as easily expected. At present, ListTyp counts 34 tags for this parameter⁵, some of which are declared uncertain cases (like ‘Plural / intensifying’), although there is a clear predominance of some functions like Additive and Alternative, but also Pluractional and Intensifying.⁶

By using the advanced search, other parameters are searchable, divided into three main groups of information: (i) Language info; (ii) Metadata; (iii) Formal and functional properties.

Information under **Language info** includes:

- *Iso Code 639 3*: the code for the representation of names of languages (Part 3).
- *Macro Area*: ‘Africa’, ‘Australia’, ‘Australia & New Guinea’, ‘Eurasia’, ‘North America’, ‘South America’.
- *Family / Genus / Sub Classification*: following Ethnologue’s genealogical classification.

Information under **Metadata** includes:

- *Reference*: the source (grammar, corpus, etc.) from which the example was taken.
- *Page*: the page or other reference – depending on the type of source – from which the example was taken.
- *Collector*: the person(s) responsible for (finding and/or uploading) the example.
- *Other Examples*: similar examples to be found in the same grammar (for the time being, only one example per type of structure is included in Dataset A).

⁵The values are: Additive; Additive / sequentiality; Adverbialization; Alternative; Alternative / approximating; Antipassive; Approximating; Attenuative; Categorizing; Clarification; Collective; Contrastive; Contrastive focus; Diminutive; Distributive; Emphasis; Endearment; Enumeration; Generalizing; Intensifying; Intensifying / pluractional; Nominalization; Non-prototypicality / plurality; Pluractional; Plural; Plural / intensifying; Politeness; Predicative; Reciprocal; Reformulation; Related variety; Self-repair; Skepticism; Stylistic effect; Word formation

⁶Both the ‘Construction’ and the ‘Function’ parameters and their values will be subject to reflection at a later stage of the project.

Information under **Formal and functional properties** (taken and adapted from Masini et al. 2018, to which we refer for details) includes:

- *Syndesis*: presence of connectives (‘yes’) (e.g. Kuot *U-rau, nəmo bun me-nəmu-a ga me-o* lit. 3mS-be.afraid COMPL APPR 3pS-kill-3mO and 3pS-eat.3sO ‘He was afraid lest they kill and eat him’, cf. Lindström (2002), p. 11) or absence of connectives (‘no’) (e.g. Lijili *Ziriji kè, móotòò kè, ñjìn kè* lit. train here-is, motor here-is, engine here-is ‘There are trains and cars and engines’; cf. Stofberg (1978), p. 104).
- *Type Of Syndesis*: ‘conjunctive’ (cf. the Kuot example), ‘disjunctive’ (e.g. Yaul *Kawana mi mında o utam ama-p* lit. [name] 3SG banana or yam eat-PRF ‘Kawana ate either a banana or a yam’, Barlow (2018), p. 303) or ‘adversative’ (e.g. Madura *Hanina ngenom kopi tape banne teh* lit. Hanina AV.drink coffee but not tea ‘Hanina drinks coffee but not tea’, cf. Davies (2010), p. 339).
- *Prosodic Marking*: presence (‘yes’) or absence (‘no’) of (this field largely depends on the kind of source used and on the possibility to perform a prosodic analysis on the datum).
- *Type Of Prosodic Marking*: if present (open field).
- *Number Of Conjuncts*: the number of items that make up the LP example (‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’, etc., up to very complex examples, like this from Italian, found in the LIP corpus (Dataset C): *RAIDUE o RAITRE o Canale cinque o Montecarlo Teleroma Gbr o Videomusic Retequattro chi piu’ ne ha piu’ ne vede* ‘RAIDUE or RAITRE or Canale Cinque or Montecarlo Teleroma Gbr or Videomusic Retequattro whoever has more sees more’).
- *Complexity Of Conjuncts*: ‘Word’, ‘Phrase’, ‘Sentence’.
- *Category*: ‘Nouns’, ‘Verbs’, ‘Adjectives’, ‘Adverbs’, ‘Numerals’, etc. See for instance, in Gooniyandi, a case of reduplication of verbs (*doog* ‘tap’ > *doogdoog* ‘tap repeatedly’, cf. McGregor (1990), p. 83) vs. a case of reduplication of nouns (*barndanyi* ‘old woman’ > *barndanyibarndanyi* ‘old women’, cf. McGregor (1990), p. 237).

- *Presence Of Determiners*: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (when the ‘Category’ is tagged as ‘Nouns’).
- *Dialogic*: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (referring to the fact that lists may be dialogically co-constructed by speakers in interaction).
- *Interruption*: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (referring to the fact that lists may be interrupted by, e.g., discourse markers or hesitations in interaction).
- *Type Of Interruption*: if present (open field).
- *Presence Of General Extender*: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (general extenders being elements like *and stuff like that, and so on, etcetera* found at the end of a list, cf. Overstreet (2005)). See for instance Daga *ogi guép eragi kerip iravi* lit. banana loin/cloth mat betel/nut all ‘banana, loin cloth, mat, and betel nut, all (of them)’ (Murane (1974), p. 94) or Napoletano-Calabrese (Cilentan variety) *add’a ballà tutto ’u tribunale // sègge // tavuli // tuttu còse!* lit. have.PRS.3SG COMPL dance.INF all DET court chairs tables all things ‘It has to dance all the court: chairs, tables, all the things’ (from Dataset B).
- *Type Of General Extender*: if present (open field).
- *Presence Of List Surroundings*: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (list surroundings being elements connected to the LP that occur in its immediate context).
- *Type Of List Surroundings*: the values are ‘projection component’ or ‘post-detailing component’ (cf. Selting (2007)). In addition, the specific expression may be optionally added between square brackets. See e.g. this Italian example taken from the LIP corpus (Dataset C): *la seconda guerra mondiale e’ [...] una guerra con armi piu’ sofisticate bombe cioe’ una guerra proprio di distruzione* ‘World War II it’s [...] a war with more sophisticated weapons bombs that is a war of destruction’, where *cioe’ una guerra proprio di distruzione* ‘that is a war of destruction’ is a post-detailing component.
- *Compositional*: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (referring to the fact that lists may have different degrees of compositionality, a more or less literal/exhaustive interpretation, which we had

to bring back to a binary value for simplicity). Reduplication examples like Lavukaleve *lafa* ‘place’ > *lafalafa* ‘every place’ (Terrill (2003), p. 36) or compounds like Kwewa, East *no’go-naaki* lit. girl-boy ‘children’ (Yarapea (2006), p. 169) are clear cases of non-compositional LPs, although non-literal, non-exhaustive lists are common in syntax too.

- *Natural Vs Accidental Coordination*: the possible values are ‘natural’ (marking that the conjuncts of the LP are lexico-semantically related, like in Havasupai-Walapai-Yavapai *had(a)-ch bos(a)-m day-k-yu* lit. dog-SUBJ cat-with 3=play=pl-ss-aux ‘A dog and a cat are playing (together)’; cf. Watahomigie et al. (1982), p. 55) and ‘accidental’ (not lexico-semantically related, like in Gooniyandi *dawoonggoowaangginmiyi jaji maa-mi ngaaddi-mi* lit. you:two:like:it what meat-IND stone-IND ‘Do you two want meat or money?’, cf. McGregor (1990), p. 286), largely as intended by Wälchli (2005).
- *Semantic Relation Between Conjuncts*: the possible values are either the lexico-semantic relation between the conjuncts (‘Synonyms’, ‘Co-hyponyms’, ‘Antonyms’, etc.; plus ‘Near-identical’ / ‘Identical’) or the fact they are ‘Frame-related’ or ‘Unrelated’.

Some fields may contain a double slash (/), which means that the field was deemed either irrelevant (‘does not apply’) or uncertain (‘to be checked’).

3.2 Search Options and Functions

Each of the parameters presented in Subsection 3.1 can be searched alone or in combination with other parameters. A specific set of filters can be saved and re-applied. The same holds for specific grid sorts. When performing a search, all valid hits appear in a tabular grid on the ‘Examples’ webpage.

3.3 Data Visualization

Data resulting from a query are visualized as text (relevant languages may be visualized on a map). The ‘Examples’ webpage shows the main parameters only, whereas the rest of the parameters are available through the ‘Advanced search’ interface. However, a function is available to personalize the

main grid configuration in terms of page size, default filter criteria, default sort criteria, and order and display of grid columns.

Each single example in the database has three options of visualization (see the Appendix):

(i) as a line on the tabular grid, where each column corresponds to one of the main parameters (or the parameters customized and set by the user);

(ii) as a ‘traditional’ horizontal example with interlinear morphemic glosses (which shows up on request right below each line in the column grid);

(iii) as a separate full-page ‘card’ containing all the information available for that item, including main parameters, advanced search parameters, and localization map.

4 An Open Project

ListTyp is an ongoing project that welcomes collaborations for both data collection and analysis. We are currently processing data for completing Dataset A and enriching the other datasets. Updates will be published periodically. A full documentation will be available soon.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix: Visualizations for Example 269

Tabular grid

Language	Source	Example	Glosses	Translation	Schema	Construction	Function	
Yeri	Grammar	yot-u-ø h-o mineigi wia-i wia-i o mineigi ŋa-i o wona ŋa-n o	DEM-MDIST-SG.F 1PL-stay.R time.period two-F two-F or time.period one-PL or moon one-SG.M or	'There we stayed for four weeks or one week or one month. '	X or Y or Z or	Coordination	Approximating	

Horizontal

yot-u-ø h-o **mineigi wia-i wia-i o mineigi ŋa-i o wona ŋa-n o**
 DEM-MDIST-SG.F 1PL-stay.R time.period two-F two-F or time.period one-PL or moon one-SG.M or
 'There we stayed for **four weeks or one week or one month.**'

Full-page 'card'

Available at:

<https://listtyp.it/row/view?id=269>

← Example: #269

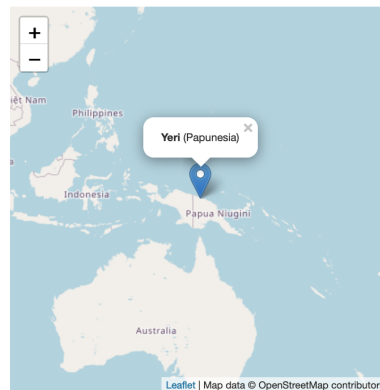
Language	Yeri
Source	Grammar
Example	yot-u-ø h-o mineigi wia-i wia-i o mineigi ŋa-i o wona ŋa-n o
Glosses	DEM-MDIST-SG.F 1PL-stay.R time.period two-F two-F or time.period one-PL or moon one-SG.M or
Translation	'There we stayed for four weeks or one week or one month. '
Schema	X or Y or Z or
Construction	Coordination
Function	Approximating

Metadata

Reference	Jennifer Wilson. 2017. A grammar of Yeri: A Torricelli language of Papua New Guinea. (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo; xxviii+805pp.)
Page	337
Collector	Simone Mattioli
Other Examples	
Status	

Language info

Iso Code 639 3	yev
Macro Area	Australia & New Guinea
Family	Toricelli
Genus	Wapei-Palei
Sub Classification	Wapei



Formal and functional properties

Synthesis	Yes
Type Of Synthesis	Disjunctive
Prosodic Marking	No
Type Of Prosodic Marking	//
Number Of Conjuncts	3
Complexity Of Conjuncts	Phrase
Category	NPs
Presence Of Determiners	//
Dialogic	No
Interruption	No
Type Of Interruption	//
Presence Of General Extender	No
Type Of General Extender	//
Presence Of List Surroundings	No
Type Of List Surroundings	//
Compositional	No
Natural Vs Accidental Coordination	Natural
Semantic Relation Between Conjuncts	Co-hyponyms