

**Morpheme order in Murrinh-Patha:
Or why Murrinh-Patha is not an Athapaskan language**

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If questions concerning affix ordering are among the central ones in morphological theory, then languages with templatic morphology appear to provide the least interesting answer, since in these languages affix order must be simply stipulated in the form of arbitrary position classes. For this reason, much recent research into templatic morphology has attempted to show that affix order in such languages *is* in fact governed by underlying semantic or syntactic principles (e.g. Baker 1985, Bybee 1985, Rice 2000, McDonough 2000). The most fully articulated position in this respect is Rice (2000) who provides a comprehensive analysis of morpheme order across the Athapaskan languages and argues that it is largely determined by universal principles of semantic and syntactic scope. If these principles of word formation are truly universal, we should expect to find evidence for them in all similarly ‘templatic’ systems, including the head-marking languages of Australia. In this context, I discuss the order of verbal affixes in Murrinh-Patha and show that this data cannot be adequately accounted for by syntactic or semantic accounts of affix ordering, but rather provide strong support for the existence of templatic organization in morphological systems.

References

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