

## What are the limits of Polysynthesis?

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Of the various labels for morphological types currently in use by typologists 'polysynthesis' has proved to be the most difficult to pin down. For some it just represents an extreme on the dimension of synthesis (one of Sapir's two major typological axes) while for others it is an independent category or parameter with far-reaching morphosyntactic ramifications. A recent characterization (Evans & Sasse 2002: 3f.) is the following: 'Essentially, then, a prototypical polysynthetic language is one in which it is possible, in a single word, to use processes of morphological composition to encode information about both the predicate and all its arguments, for all major clause types [...] to a level of specificity, allowing this word to serve alone as a free-standing utterance without reliance on context.' If the nub of polysynthesis is the packing of a lot of material into single verb forms that would be expressed as independent words in less synthetic languages, what exactly is the nature of and limitations on this 'material'? The present paper investigates the limits – both upwards and downwards – of what the term is generally understood to cover.

### Reference

Evans, N. & H.-J. Sasse (eds.). (2002). *Problems of Polysynthesis*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.