

Li8: Morphology/Michaelmas 2017

Dimensions of variation

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M11-12 / LB9 / 16-10

Morphological alternations

- ❖ An alternation involves a discriminable contrast along one of the observable dimensions of variation:
 - ❖ Contrasts in the shape of elements,
 - ❖ Contrasts in the arrangement of elements,
 - ❖ Contrasts in the distribution of elements.
- ❖ All of the components of morphological descriptions are ultimately derivative of these observable properties.

Contrasts in the shape of elements

- ❖ The most common type of variation involves contrasts in the shape of words and sub-word elements.
- ❖ The most common types of shape contrasts are segmental, involving phonetic 'segments' (i.e., phonemes or phones).
- ❖ The most common segmental contrasts are affixal, involving the addition (or subtraction) of segments.
- ❖ The four basic varieties of affixation are suffixation, prefixation, infixation and circumfixation / parafixation.

Suffixation and prefixation

- ❖ The most common types of affixation involves the addition of material at the beginning and end of units:
 - ❖ In *books*, the plural marker *-s* is suffixed to the end of book.
 - ❖ In *reheat*, the iterative marker *re-* is prefixed to the beginning of heat.
- ❖ Why is affixation the most common form of shape contrast, and why are suffixes and prefixes the most common affixes?
- ❖ Does this indicate that affixes have a privileged status in a morphological system and / or that edges have a distinguished status?
- ❖ Or does it just reflect recurrent historical origins of morphology?

The suffixing preference

- ❖ Suffixation is by far the most common form of affixation.
- ❖ Some languages are exclusively suffixing whereas none are exclusively prefixing – see, e.g., WALS (Dryer & Haspelmath 2011).
 - ❖ What might account for this bias? A tendency for function words to follow content words? Prosodic patterns that lead to a preference for encliticization over procliticization, or which facilitate vowel reduction at the ends of words? Or could it reflect the fact that the information carried by elements is order-dependent?
- ❖ Some recurrent patterns of morphologization also appear to be restricted to suffixes. The reanalysis of postpositions as case markers is one. (Can you think of any examples of prefixal case markers?)

Infixation

- ❖ Infixation is described as arising as a prosodically-conditioned variant, so that few infixes lack prefixal or suffixal variants.
- ❖ In English, additional emphasis can be placed on expletives such as *bloody* by interposing them between two prosodic feet of the noun that they are modifying (McMillan 1980, McCarthy 1982):
 - ❖ *bloody unlikely* ~ *un-bloody-likely*
- ❖ In Tagalog, *um* is prefixed to vowel-initial verb roots but infixes after the initial consonant of consonant-initial roots Aspillera (1981: 45f.):
 - ❖ *alís* ~ *umalís* 'to leave' vs *bása* ~ *bumása* 'to read'.

Circumfixation

- ❖ Circumfixation (or parafixation) is the most sparsely attested type of affixation. Many cases invite reanalysis as successive affixation.
- ❖ The formation of the perfect participle in German is sometimes described in terms of a circumfix *ge ... t*. On this analysis, a regular verb like *sagen* 'say' has a basic stem *sag-* and a perfect participle *gesagt*.
 - ❖ However, given that the preterite series is based on a stem *sagt*, the perfect *gesagt* can also be formed by prefixing *ge-* to this stem.
- ❖ Chukchee presents a less ambiguous case, as privative case is formed by suffixing *-ka* to vowel-initial noun roots but by circumfixing *e/a ... ka* to consonant-initial roots (Spencer 2000):
 - ❖ *ococ* 'leader' ~ *ococ-ka* 'leaderless' vs *titi* 'needle' ~ *e-titi-ke* 'needleness'.

Subtraction

- ❖ Subtraction (or truncation) usually involves the prosodically conditioned loss of a segment, with conditions on the output.
- ❖ In Papago (Tohono O'odham), consonant-final imperfectives have perfective counterparts without the final consonant (Zepeda 1983):
 - ❖ *him* ~ *hi* 'walking.SG'
 - ❖ *hihim* ~ *hihi* 'walking.PL'
- ❖ In Lardil (Hale 1967) and Estonian (Murk 1997), the nominative singular form may lack a final segment that occurs in the inflectional stem.
 - ❖ Lardil: *yiliyili* 'oyster' ~ *yiliyil* 'NOM.SG' ~ *yiliyili-n* 'ACC.SG'
 - ❖ Estonian: *raamatu* 'book' ~ *raamat* 'NOM.SG' ~ *raamatut* 'PART.SG'

Morphological truncation in Lardil (Hale 1967)

- ❖ There is a general analytic bias against subtraction; whenever available, an additive analysis is preferred.
- ❖ There must be a reason why an additive analysis is not available for nominative singulars in Estonian/Lardil.
- ❖ In Lardil, vowel truncation in the nominative singular is morphological (since vowel-final words are possible) but consonant truncation reflects a general constraint against non-coronal consonants in final position.

Morphological truncation in Lardil (Hale 1967)

Stem	Nom Sg	Acc Sg	Gloss
yalulu	yalul	yalulun	'flame'
mayara	mayar	mayaran	'rainbow'
ɲaluk	ɲalu	ɲalukin	'story'
waɲalk	waɲal	waɲalkin	'boomerang'
wulunka	wulun	wulunkan	'fruit'
pulumunitami	pulumunita	pulumunitamin	'young female dugong'

Qualitative and suprasegmental contrasts

- ❖ Morphological alternations can also involve qualitative or quantitative contrasts between segments or contrasts between suprasegmental properties:
 - ❖ Ablaut and gradation illustrate qualitative contrasts.
 - ❖ Contrasts in stress, tone, pitch, etc., illustrate suprasegmental alternations.

Vowel ablaut

- ❖ Ablaut (apophony) involves a change in vowel quality.
- ❖ In German (as in English), present, preterite and participial forms of strong verbs exhibit morphologically conditioned ablaut patterns:
 - ❖ *singe* 'SING.1SG.PRES' ~ *sang* '1SG.PRET' ~ *gesungen* 'PART'.
 - ❖ *nehme* 'TAKE.1SG.PRES' ~ *nahm* '1SG.PRET' ~ *genommen* 'PART'.
- ❖ In Lezgian (Dagestani), the inessive form of a noun "is marked by lowering the final vowel of the oblique stem" (Haspelmath 1993):
 - ❖ *čarxú* 'rock' ~ *čarxá* 'INES.SG'
 - ❖ *čarxí* 'rock' ~ *čarxé* 'INES.SG'

Gradation in Pilte Saami (Wilbur 2014: 101)

	Sg	Pl
Nom	luakkta	luokta
Gen	luokta	luoktaj
Acc	luoktav	luoktajd
Ill	luakktaj	luoktajda
Ines	luoktan	luoktajn
Elat	luoktast	luoktajst
Com	luoktajn	luoktaj
Abes	luoktadak	luoktadaga
Ess	luakktan	luakktan

Contrastive tonal melodies in Dinka (Andersen 2002: 9)

- ❖ “The oblique is distinguished from the absolutive in virtually all monosyllabic nouns that have a short vowel ... and in most disyllabic nouns with the prefix à- and a short root vowel ... The rule for such nouns is that if the absolutive has a low root tone [ù] ... then the oblique gets a falling root tone [û], and if the absolutive has a high or falling root tone [ú or û] ... then the oblique gets a low root tone [ù].”

Contrasts in the arrangement and distribution

- ❖ Morphological alternations can also involve contrasts in arrangement and distribution.
- ❖ There are pure cases of arrangement contrasts, such as metathesis or variation in affixal order.
- ❖ But arrangement and segmental contrasts can also combine, as in reduplication.
- ❖ Local distributional contrasts include 'reversal' of vowel or tonal contrasts and 'exchange patterns'.

Reduplication and metathesis

- ❖ Reduplication copies all or part of a base form.
- ❖ The future in Tagalog reduplicates the first syllable of a root:
 - ❖ *alís* ~ *aalís* 'LEAVE.FUT'
 - ❖ *bása* ~ *babása* 'READ.FUT'
- ❖ Metathesis reorders the relative order of segments or exponents.
- ❖ In Rotuman (Churchward 1940) CV metathesis distinguishes the 'complete' from the 'incomplete phase':
 - ❖ *seséva* ~ *seséav* 'erroneous'
 - ❖ *tíko* ~ *tíok* 'flesh'

Interpreting (and explaining) typological patterns

- ❖ Common morphological patterns are sometimes classified as 'unmarked' and accorded a privileged status in theoretical and typological descriptions.
- ❖ Yet it is often the case that 'marked' patterns are highly stable, once established in a morphological system.
- ❖ This reopens the question of whether common patterns have a privileged status in a morphological system or whether frequency reflects recurrent historical origins.