

Li8 Supervision assignment 2

Segmentation and interpretation

Due 6 November

Variation in morphological shape often encodes a grammatical relation between forms. Agreement/concord represents one familiar type of shape variation.

The sub-paradigm of the Georgian verb ‘to kill’ in Table 1 illustrates regular patterns, in which the prefixes *m-* and *gv-* encode agreement with 1sg and 1pl subjects, and the suffixes *-s* and *-en* encode agreement with 3sg and 3pl subjects.

	1Sg Obj	1Plu Obj	Gloss
3Sg Subj	momk'lavs	mogvk'lavs	‘I/we will kill him/her’
3Plu Subj	momk'laven	mogvk'laven	‘I/we will kill them’

Table 1: Forms from the future indicative sub-paradigm

The elements of form that express the verb stem and the agreement properties can be isolated, as in Table 2 (where *mo* is a ‘preverb’ and *k'lav* is the verb root):

Stem	1Sg Obj	1Plu Obj	3Sg Subj	3Plu Subj
mo ... k'lav	m-	gv-	-s	-en

Table 2: Stem and agreement markers

Task 1: Verbal agreement in Mari

Consider the verb forms in Table 3 and (i) propose a segmentation of stem and inflectional markers for each form, then (ii) identify how each of the features is expressed in this sub-paradigm. (Don't worry about representing all of the diacritic characters as long as you make uniform substitutions, e.g., 'e' for 'ə'.)

	Past	Affirmative	Past	Negative
1Sg	koləšə̃m	'I died'	šə̃m kolə	'I didn't die'
2Sg	koləšə̃c	'you died'	šə̃c kolə	'you didn't die'
3Sg	koləš	's/he died'	ə̃š kolə	's/he didn't die'

Table 3: Verbal agreement patterns in Mari

Task 2: Pronominal inflection in Mari

Consider the pronominal forms in Table 4 and again (i) propose a segmentation of stem and inflectional markers, and (ii) identify how features are expressed.

	Nominative	Genitive	Accusative	Dative
1Sg	mə́n	mə́nən	mə́nəm	mə́nlänem
2Sg	tə́n	tə́nən	tə́nəm	tə́länet
3Sg	tə̃ðə	tə̃ðən	tə̃ðəm	tə̃ðəlän
1Plu	mä	mämnän	mämnäm	mälännä
2Plu	tä	tämdän	tämdäm	tälländä
3Plu	nənə	nənən	nənəm	nənəlan

Table 4: Pronominal inflection patterns in Mari

Task 3: Tense inflection and agreement in Fore

Consider next the verbal forms in Table 5 and (i) propose a segmentation of stem and inflectional markers for each form, (ii) identify how each of the features is expressed. (Don't worry about the shift of accented characters ú and é.)

	Past	Far Past	Future	Present
1Sg	natúwe	nantuwé	nakuwe	nauwe
1Plu	natúne	nantuné	nakune	naune
1Du	natúse	nantusé	nakuse	nause
2Sg	natáane	nantané	nakibene	naane
2Plu	natáawe	nantawé	nakibewe	naawe
2Du	natáase	nantasé	nakibese	naase
3Sg	natayé	nantiyé	nakiye	naayé
3Plu	natáawe	nantawé	nakibewe	naawe
3Du	natáase	nantasé	nakibese	naase

Table 5: Neutral transitive indicative verbal agreement in Fore

Task 4: Componential analysis of grammatical features

Examine your analyses of the forms in Tables 3–5 and determine whether any of the patterns can be analyzed further. For example, does a comparison of 1Sg and 1Plu markers identify a common marker of first person? Does a comparison of the 1Sg, 2Sg and 3Sg markers identify a common marker of singular number? And if so, is the 1Sg marker composed of the first person and singular markers, the 2Plu marker of the second person and plural markers, etc.?

Bonus Task: Granularity of grammatical marking

What factors might contribute to the learnability or the communicative efficiency of an agreement system? Is it important that individual features, such as first, second and third person, or singular, dual and plural number are each expressed by unique markers? Or can you think of other factors that might be relevant to the learnability or communicative function of agreement paradigms?