The Locus of Variation in Ā-Sensitive Agreement

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Parameters Workshop, McGill University, May 17–18, 2019

Overview

Ā-sensitive φ-agreement effects have an underlying uniform syntax. Variation in these morphological, arising from operations and principles independently needed in morphology.

Ā-sensitive φ-agreement effects

An instance of φ-agreement X exhibits an Ā-sensitivity effect if:

1. X takes the form A for a particular set of φ-features φ1 on nominal N when N does not have an Ā-feature and
2. X takes the form B for φ2 on N when N does have an Ā-feature, where φ₁ ≠ φ₂.

Some examples of effects meeting the above definition:

1. Fiorentino (Romance, Italy)
   le ragazze che gli / 'le
   'the girls who said' (Brandi and Cordin 1989:324–125)
2. Abkhaz (West Caucasian, Russia)
   way x-ac'a da- /-z-
   'the girl who saw that boy' (Brandi and Cordin 1989:324–125)
3. Kabyle (Berber, Algeria)
   taqcict- /n-
   'the girl who saw Mohand' (Brandi and Cordin 1989:324–125)

The Proposal

Ā-sensitive agreement have a unified underlying source

Syntax

φ-probes copy [φ] and [Ā] from their goals

Morphology

After agree with an Ā-marked DP in (4), H has both [φ] and [Ā]. Also includes a feature [Agr].

Features on H in morphology

a. DP w/o [Ā] ⇒ [H, [φ, Agr]]
   b. DP w/ [Ā] ⇒ [H, [φ, A, Agr]]

Ā-triggered impoverishment (Baier 2018)

Ā-features may trigger impoverishment of φ-features on the same probe, (6).

Vocabulary Insertion

Impovery impedes to the realization of an unexpected underspecified exponent.

Morphological variation

Variation arises from how a given language’s morphology manipulates and realizes feature bundles of the type in (5b).

Total vs. partial φ-impoverishment

Languages differ as to how many φ-feature contrasts are neutralized in the presence of Ā-features.

1. Compare the Kabyle in (9) with Tashlhit in (10).

   (9) Kabyle (Berber, Algeria)
   tiqicin-nni i { i-rub-n / 'rub-nt } girls-DEM C { 3SG.M-go-pTCP / go-3PL.F }
   'the girls who left' (Ouhalla 2005 citing Chafiq 1990:123)

   (10) Tashlhit (Berber, Morocco)
   irgazn, nna fegh-n-‘(in)’ man.PL Cpl left-pv-pTCP-‘(pl)
   'the men who left.'

2. The difference between total/partial neutralization rests in the impoverishment rules acting in a given language.

   a. Total neutralization
   b. Partial neutralization

Ā-exponence

Languages differ as to whether there is specialized morphology in the Ā-context.

Some languages, like Fiorentino in (1), have no special morphology in the context of Ā-features.

Abkhaz: Specialized Ā-agreement (z-)

Kabyle: Default agreement (i- 3SG.M) + specialized suffix (-n)

Example 1: The Kabyle/Tashlhit ‘participle’ suffix is the spell out of an Ā-feature on a head with [Agr].

Example 2: The ergative wh-agreement prefix z- in Abkhaz is the spell out of an Ā-feature on N:

Lack of impoverishment?

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Two dimensions of variation

How many φ-feature contrasts are expressed in the Ā-context? (variation at step 3)

Is there specialized morphology that occurs only in the Ā-context (variation at step 3)?

These dimensions are independent of one another, as shown in table (8).

Typology of Ā-exponence and impoverishments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ā-exponent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Partial</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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