A Radically Non-Morphemic Approach to Bidirectional Syncretism

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This paper addresses the question of how certain kinds of overlapping syncretisms in inflectional paradigms can be accounted for that Baerman et al. (2005) refer to as *convergent/divergent bidirectional syncretisms* (based on earlier work by Stump (2001)). Bidirectional syncretism strongly resists accounts in terms of standard rules of exponence (or similar devices) that correlate inflection markers with (often underspecified) morpho-syntactic specifications (such rules are used in many morphological theories; e.g., Anderson (1992), Halle & Marantz (1993), Aronoff (1994), Wunderlich (1996), and Stump (2001)). The reason is that it is difficult to capture overlapping distributions by natural classes. In view of this, rules of referral have been proposed to derive bidirectional syncretism (Stump (2001), Baerman et al. (2005)). In contrast, I would like to pursue the hypothesis that systematic instances of overlapping syncretism ultimately motivate a new approach to inflectional morphology – one that fully dispenses with the assumption that morphological exponents are paired with morpho-syntactic feature specifications (and that therefore qualifies as radically non-morphemic): First, rules of exponence are replaced with feature co-occurrence restrictions (FCRs; Gazdar et al. (1985)). For phonologically determined natural classes of exponents, FCRs state incompatibilites with morpho-syntactic feature specifications. Second, marker competition is resolved by a principle of Sonority-driven Marker Selection (SMS). SMS takes over the role of the Specificity (Blocking, Elsewhere, Panini) Principle of standard analyses.

Empirically, the main focus is on Bonan declension; the analysis is subsequently extended to Gujarati conjugation and Latin *o*-declension, with further remarks on bidirectional syncretism in other inflectional paradigms.

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