A Postsyntactic Morphome Cookbook

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In this tutorial, I introduce the basic theoretical methods to implement morphomes (i.e. systematic patterns of unnatural syncretism, Aronoff 1994) in Distributed Morphology (DM, Halle and Marantz 1993; Harley and Noyer 1999).

The success of transferring morphomes into a postsyntactic DM setting crucially depends on the use of morphological features which are not interpretable by syntax – and possibly also not by any other module of the grammar (see Svenonius 2007 on recent discussion of uninterpretable features more generally), henceforth *morphomic features* (cf. also Bonami and Boyé 2008 on the application of morphomic features outside of DM). I will discuss the two canonical methods Standard DM has to make such features available to morphological spellout: Postsyntactic rules, possibly in tandem with prespecification in vocabulary items (e.g. the *redundancy rules* proposed in Halle and Marantz 1994), and the decomposition of syntactic features into apparently "more atomic" morphological ones (e.g. the decomposition of case into features such as +/–oblique in Halle and Vaux 1998, Müller 2005).

A special focus of the tutorial will be on particular features which often make DM-style morphomes opaque to the morphome community outside of DM: the preference for organizing morphomic features into (morphomic) "theme positions" which form independent nodes in (post-)syntactic structure (Oltra-Massuet 1999; Embick and Halle 2011), and the reluctance to assume crosscategorial morphomes (i.e. in DM-terms, morphomic features which are linked to more than one syntactic head) such as the L- and N-pattern proposed for Romance by Maiden (2005). I will show that the assumption of theme heads is for most practical purposes a notational variant of introducing morphomic features at independently motivated syntactic heads and that standard DM techniques such as redundancy rules fully suffice to generate crosscategorial morphomes.

Nonetheless I will argue that the DM-way to approach morphomes is superior to the more conventional way of doing morphomes because it nicely realizes the iconic mirrorring of complexity in language by the structure of grammars (see Chomsky and Halle 1968 for detailed discussion) and gives rise to a markedness hierarchy for morphomes which is not available in other frameworks.

Finally, I will address the much-discussed question of suppletive root allomorphy ("stems" in the terminology of Aronoff 1994) and show, following Embick and Halle (2005), that this problem is in principle orthogonal to the question whether morphomes are implemented postsyntactically or in a lexicalist environment.

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