The morphology-syntax interface: agreeement morphology in Plains Cree

Alex Alsina
Universitat Pompeu Fabra
alex.alsina@upf.edu

Eugenio M. Vigo
Universitat Pompeu Fabra
eugenio.vigo@upf.edu

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The goal of this paper is to provide an account of the complex agreement morphology of Plains Cree (Algonquian). Our main theoretical claim is that the inflectional morphology of a word is licensed by its abstract syntactic features. For this we adopt the LFG idea that syntactic information is factored into two different structures (c- and f-structure), which are in a mutually constraining relation, and assume that this is so not only at the phrasal level, but also at the word level. The inflectional morphology-syntax interface is an instance in which the word-level f-structure licenses the morphological composition of the word (the c-structure terminal node).

Verbal inflectional morphology in Plains Cree presents many examples of one-to-many relations between person and number affixes and the grammatical function (GF) they refer to (data from Dahlstrom 1986 and Zúñiga 2008). One of the salient properties of Plains Cree verbal agreement morphology is that person-number affixes are neutral with respect to GFs. It is the direction suffix that connects the person and number information to specific GFs. Affixes form independent sets (*schemata* in Anderson 1992): within each set affixes are licensed by rules that are ranked in a preferential order; the first applicable rule blocks the application of any subsequent, lower ranking rule.

The proposal of deriving the morphological composition of the word from its f-structure information allows us to avoid making use of additional structures or features like M-features (Dalrymple 2015), which essentially duplicate the f-structure information. Our proposal provides a way to explain one-to-many relations at the morphology-syntax interface while keeping the architecture of the theoretical framework as simple as possible.

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