

**Stony Brook University
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

Inflectional Morphology in Optimality Theory

By

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This dissertation proposes an inferential-realizational model of inflectional morphology (Matthews 1972, Zwicky 1985, Anderson 1992, Aronoff 1994, Stump 2001) within the framework of Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky 1993). Following Russell 1995, Yip 1998, Hyman 2003, MacBride 2004, I assume that morphophonological information of inflectional affixes is introduced through realization constraints (RC) which associate abstract morphosyntactic or semantic feature values with morphophonological forms. I propose that rankings of realization constraints conform to the specificity condition, i.e. a constraint realizing a more specific morphosyntactic feature value set outranks a less specific realization constraint. I also propose that the unmarked situation in which one feature value is realized by one form (Wurzel 1989) is encoded in two universal and violable markedness constraints, *FEATURE SPLIT which bans a feature value realized by more than one form and *FEATURE FUSION which bans a form realizing more than one feature value.

Based on this model, I examine language phenomena such as OCP-triggered selection of phonologically unrelated (allo)morphs in Greek, Hungarian, Tswana, and Spanish, ordering of inflectional affixes in Lezgian, blocking of inflectional affixes and extended morphological exponence in languages like Tamazight Berber, and directional syncretism in languages like Latin.

I show that this model has advantages over other morphological models in several ways. (1) It readily captures cases in which a default marker emerges to replace a marker which contains more specific morphosyntactic content and is expected to be adjacent to a form whose phonological shape is similar to the more specific marker (OCP >> RC_{specific} >> RC_{less specific}). By contrast, the relation between a more specific marker and a less specific one has to be stipulated in the input in a model which introduces morphophonological information through inputs (Bonet 2004). (2) It readily captures universal generalizations on affix ordering (Greenberg 1963, Bybee 1985), e.g. a number exponent cannot be farther away from a nominal stem than a case exponent because case scopes over number. Such generalizations are missed in Paradigm Functional Morphology (Stump 2001) without extraordinary machinery. (3) Based on rankings of *FEATURE SPLIT and constraints realizing the same morphosyntactic feature value(s), it provides a unified account of both blocking and extended exponence without recourse to either distinction between primary and secondary exponents (Noyer 1992) or multiple rule blocks (Stump 2001). (4) Based on output-to-output correspondence constraints, it readily captures cases of divergent bidirectional syncretism (Baerman 2004) in which syncretism brings about both marked and unmarked forms, a problem for Noyer 1998, which claims that syncretism always moves from a more marked to a less marked state.

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