

## Metasyncretism II: Harley (2008)

Andrew Murphy

andrew.murphy@uchicago.edu

### 1 English pronouns

		singular			plural		
		masculine	feminine	neuter	masculine	feminine	neuter
1	Nom	<i>I</i>			<i>we</i>		
	Acc	<i>me</i>			<i>us</i>		
	Gen	<i>my</i>			<i>our</i>		
2	Nom	<i>you</i>					
	Acc	<i>you</i>					
	Gen	<i>your</i>					
3	Nom	<i>he</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>they</i>		
	Acc	<i>him</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>them</i>		
	Gen	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>its</i>	<i>their</i>		

What are the patterns here? How does Harley capture them?

- (2)
  - a. [+superior, -oblique] = nominative
  - b. [-superior, +oblique] = genitive
  - c. [-superior, -oblique] = accusative
- (3)
  - a. [-feminine, -neuter] = masculine
  - b. [+feminine, -neuter] = feminine
  - c. [-feminine, +neuter] = neuter
- (4)
  - a. [+speaker, +participant] = 1st person
  - b. [-speaker, +participant] = 2nd person
  - c. [-speaker, -participant] = 3rd person
- (5)
  - a. [+group] = plural
  - b. [-group] = singular
- (6)
  - a. *we* ↔ [D, +speaker, +group, +superior]
  - b. *our* ↔ [D, +speaker, +group, +oblique]
  - c. *us* ↔ [D, +speaker, +group]

- d. *I* ↔ [D, +speaker, +superior]
- e. *my* ↔ [D, +speaker, +oblique]
- f. *me* ↔ [D, +speaker]
- g. *your* ↔ [D, +participant, +oblique]
- h. *you* ↔ [D, +participant]
- i. *they* ↔ [D, +group, +superior]
- j. *they* ↔ [D, +group, +oblique]
- k. *them* ↔ [D, +group]
- l. *it* ↔ [D, +neuter]
- m. *she* ↔ [D, +feminine, +superior]
- n. *her* ↔ [D, +feminine]
- o. *he* ↔ [D, +superior]
- p. *his* ↔ [D, +oblique]
- q. *him* ↔ [D]

(elsewhere)

What assumptions is Harley making about features?

- (7) *The Elsewhere Principle*:  
Vocabulary items which realize more of the feature in a given terminal node are automatically ordered before vocabulary items which realize fewer of the nodes features.
- (8) *The Subset Principle*:  
Only vocabulary items whose specified features are a subset of the features in a given terminal are able to compete to discharge the position-of-exponence of that terminal node.

How does this derive the right form for the context *1st plural feminine nominative*?

Some problems:

- Problem #1:  
*1st singular feminine nominative* and competition between the forms *I* and *she*.
- Problem #2:  
*2nd plural feminine nominative* and competition between the forms *you*, *they* and *she*.
- What options do we have to fix this?

Impoverishment:

- (9) English pronominal metasyncretisms:
- Gender is not marked in first and second person pronouns.
  - Gender is not marked in plural pronouns.
  - Number is not marked in the second person.
  - Nominative/accusative is not distinguished in the second person.

- What impoverishment rules do we need?
- How does this solve the two problems above?
- What does impoverishment actually do that underspecification didn't?

## 2 Baoan

(10)

	Noun ('bird')		1st pers. pronoun		2nd pers. pronoun	
	singular	plural	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom	<i>bendžer</i>	<i>bendžerle</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>bede</i>	<i>če</i>	<i>ta</i>
Gen	<i>bendžerne</i>	<i>bendžerlene</i>	<i>mene</i>	<i>bedane</i>	<i>čene</i>	<i>tane</i>
Acc			<i>na:de</i>	<i>bedande</i>	<i>čo:de</i>	<i>tade</i>
Dat(/Loc)	<i>bendžerde</i>	<i>bendžerlede</i>	<i>na:se/bese</i>	<i>bedanse</i>	<i>čo:se</i>	<i>tase</i>
Abl	<i>bendžerse</i>	<i>bendžerlese</i>	<i>begale</i>	<i>bedagale</i>	<i>čegale</i>	<i>tagale</i>
Instr.	<i>bendžergale</i>	<i>bendžerlegale</i>				

- What is the pattern of case syncretism here?
- Why is this a problem for underspecification?

Harley's proposal:

- (11)
- [+structural, -dependent, -oblique] = nominative
  - [+structural, -dependent, +oblique] = genitive
  - [+structural, +dependent, -oblique] = accusative
  - [-structural, +dependent, -oblique] = dative
  - [-structural, +dependent, +oblique] = ablative
  - [-structural, -dependent, +oblique] = instrumental
- (12)
- se ↔ [+oblique, +dependent]
  - ne ↔ [+structural]
  - gale ↔ [+oblique]
  - de ↔ [+dependent]
  - ∅ ↔ elsewhere

- What impoverishment rule do we need?
- What special assumption does she have to make in order for this to work?
- What is Harley's reason for assuming a lexical-realization approach (i.e. morphemes)?
- What could an inferential-realizational theory look like? How can it capture the 2nd sg. pronoun paradigm?

## 3 Limbu

(13)

		non-past	past	negated non-past	negated past
1.EX	singular	V-ɣɛ	V-aɔ	mɛ-V-ɛ-n	mɛ-V-aɔ-nɛ-n
	dual	V-si-ge	V-ɛtchi-ge	mɛ-V-si-ge-n	mɛ-V-ge-n
	plural	V-i-ge	V-mʔna	mɛ-V-i-ge-n	mɛn-V-mʔna
1.IN	dual	a-V-si	a-V-ɛtchi	an-V-si-n	an-V-ɛtchi-n
	plural	a-V-∅	a-V-ɛ	an-V-nɛ-n	an-V-ɛ-n
2	singular	kɛ-V-∅	kɛ-V-ɛ	kɛn-V-nɛ-n	kɛn-V-ɛ-n
	dual	kɛ-V-si	kɛ-V-ɛtchi	kɛn-V-si-n	kɛn-V-ɛtchi-n
	plural		kɛ-V-i		kɛn-V-i-n
3	singular	V-∅	V-ɛ	mɛ-V-nɛ-n	mɛ-V-ɛ-n
	dual	V-si	V-ɛtchi	mɛ-V-si-n	mɛ-V-ɛtchi-n
	plural	mɛ-V-∅	mɛ-V-ɛ	mɛn-V-nɛ-n	mɛn-V-ɛ-n

- What regularities do we find in this paradigm?
- What is the metasyncretism? What are the ways we could capture it?

Harley claims (p.281):

If this natural class is created through Impoverishing the relevant person features, its uniformity across classes is expected; if it's an accident of vocabulary item specification, its uniformity is a surprising coincidence. Note that any single one of these column patterns could be easily taken care of by appropriate VIs and the Elsewhere Principle. Here, again, we have a case where despite the fact that Elsewhere *could* handle the ranking in each individual case, Impoverishment must be applying anyway

Is this right? What is this natural class?

## 4 Aranoan

(14)

		singular	dual	plural
1.IN	absolutive		tseada	cuada
	ergative		tseada	cuadaja
	genitive			
1.EXCL	absolutive	ema	tsema	cuama
	ergative	yama	tseama	cuamaja
	genitive	quima		
2	absolutive	midya	metseada	micana
	ergative	midyaja	metseada	micanaja
	genitive	miqueda		
3	absolutive	joda	huatseda	naeda
	ergative	huada	huatseada	naedaja
	genitive			

- What is the relevant metasyncretism here?

*Harley's proposal:*

- (15)
- a- ↔ [+minimal, +group, +oblique]
  - ja ↔ [+oblique]
  - ∅ ↔ elsewhere

- Does this analysis miss anything?

## References

Harley, Heidi (2008). When is a Syncretism more than a Syncretism? Impoverishment, Metasyncretism, and Underspecification. In D. Harbour, D. Adger and S. Béjar (eds). *Phi Theory: Phi-Features across Modules and Interfaces*. Oxford University Press: Oxford. 251–294.