

Defaults and the canonical ideal

There are two ways to conceive of the defaults in inheritance hierarchies. In the first, we might expect the combinations of defaults to correspond to an instantiated type within the language. In the second, we can argue that there is no reason that defaults in combination will produce a class which is actually instantiated. In this sense, the default class could be compared with the canonical ideal in Canonical Typology, where this may be rare or non-existent (Corbett 2007, Brown *et al.* forthcoming). The first approach can also be equated with the notion of prototype, as we would expect prototypes to be instantiated. In this talk I argue that we should see defaults in terms of the second approach in that we can identify a default realization for a particular combination of features, but have no reason to assume that combination of defaults should always produce identifiable classes.

I then go on to consider the relationship between parts of speech (represented in terms of Network Morphology's lexemic hierarchy) and the notion of the Morphologically Coherent Lexicon (Spencer 1999, 2005). According to this there is in essence a default relationship between semantics, syntax and the morphology that characterizes particular parts of speech. This also fits with the notion of canonical inflection (as discussed in Corbett 2007) where we should not expect there to be more than one means of realizing a given morphosyntactic combination. Under such a situation we do not need to allow for an autonomous morphology, because the classes established for morphology directly reflect those required by syntax. It is argued that there is a tension between two basic principles, called *Morphological Projection* and *Node Elimination* in Network Morphology (Brown and Hippisley 2012). Morphological Projection sets up the expectation that each word class will have a corresponding morphological class (or separate node), but Node Elimination will do away with a morphological hierarchy created on the basis of Morphological Projection if the morphological hierarchy is isomorphic with the lexemic hierarchy (i.e. the inflections are always entirely predictable on the basis of membership of a particular part of speech). A variety of mismatches justify the existence of a separate morphology, such as mixed category behaviour (Sadock 1985,1991; Malouf 2000 and Nikolaeva 2008), inflectional classes (Aronoff 1994), or syncretism (Stump 2001, Baerman, Brown and Corbett 2005), among others. While we might well expect there to be many instances of languages for which morphology does not play a large role, the question naturally arises whether we often find in languages with morphology (that is, grammatical expression below the word level) a natural exceptionless alignment of syntax and morphological classes. It may be that this ideal is quite rare. Indeed, we could entertain the possibility of mismatches where there is no identifiable correspondence between the classes of morphology and those of syntax. This would be an extreme instance of autonomy where morphological classes (inflectional classes, stem classes etc.) cross-cut parts of speech entirely. Instead, it is argued, such morphological classes inherit from a default (morphological) class which corresponds to an identifiable part of speech, and so, while the canonical ideal may not be found in a given language, we see reflexes of it in the inheritance hierarchy.

References

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