

Unblurring the inflection/derivation divide in Laz

The conjugation of Laz presents a spectacular challenge for the split morphology hypothesis (Perlmutter, 1988), because the same position classes and/or affixes are used both for the purposes of inflection and derivation. On the basis of a thorough examination of the Arhavi dialect (Lacroix, 2009), we show that a strict divide between inflection and derivation can be maintained if Laz morphological rules are assumed to operate over templates (Simpson & Whitgott, 1986), rather than unstructured phonological representations. We illustrate this by presenting a detailed inferential-realizational analysis.

On a descriptive level, Laz verbs can be analyzed through a template of 11 position classes (see 1) which may contain inflectional (–4, –2, 3 to 6) or derivational affixes (–3, 1) or both (–1, 2). Laz has an intricate system of person markers involving both portmanteaux and morphological reversals in positions –2 and 5 (compare e.g. (1), (2), (4)). Positions 3, 4 and 6 realize TAM and evidentiality. The remaining positions are the crucial ones for present purposes.

Depending on TAM, and as long as there is no negation, –4 may contain an affirmative preverb (6), whose identity is determined lexeme by lexeme. –3 is the locus of a series of locative preverbs which serve as the exponent of a derivation operation. –1 is either empty (2) or occupied by one of the valence affixes *i-*, *a-* and *o-*. In many of their uses these mark a derivational operation: middle formation, applicative, and/or potential (4)—all these operations may give rise to lexicalization. However (i) many underived transitive lexemes are lexically specified for the marker *o-* (3); and (ii) in the perfect, whichever marker the lexeme specifies is replaced by *u-* with 3rd person subjects, *i-* otherwise (5). Thus the expression of an inflectional distinction preempts that of lexical and/or derivational material. Position 1 may contain only a causative suffix. Each lexeme may be specified for a specific thematic suffix (THS); in some TAM combinations, position 2 contains the THS if it exists ((1),(2),(3)); in others (6) position 2 must be empty; in others still (5,7) a specific inflectional suffix is used instead. Notice that the potential derivation overrides the THS of its base (4). Thus there is competition between lexemic (the THS), derivational and inflectional material in 2.

	–4	–3	–2	–1	root	1	2	3	4	5	6	
(1)	ko	go	m	o	k'untsx	in	am	t'	i	t	doe	'You (pl) were waking me up, I'm told'
	AFF	LOC	OBJ.1	TR	wake_up	CAUS	THS	IPFV	PST	SBJ.12PL	EVD	
(2)			p		ç'op		um					'I catch it'
			1>3		catch		THS					
(3)			b	o	gn		am					'I hear it'
			1>3	TR	hear		THS					
(4)			m	a	ç'op		e(r)			n		'I am able to catch it'
			SUBJ.1	POT	catch		THS			obj.3sg		
(5)			m	i	ç'op		u			n		'I have caught it' or 'I have been able to catch it'
			SUBJ.1	PRF	catch		PRF			obj.3sg		
(6)	o		p		ç'op				i			'I caught it'
	AFF		1>3		catch				PST			
(7)			p		ç'op		a	t'	i			'If only I could catch it!'
			1>3		catch		PST.OPT	IPFV	PST			

The Laz data shows that inflection and derivation may target the same positions in a template; in addition, the interspersion of inflectional and derivational material vastly exceeds what is allowed by current approaches (e.g. Stump, 2001; ch. 4). We submit that this justifies reifying the template as the data structure morphological rules operate on. We compare two ways of doing this within an inferential-realizational approach: (i) model the template as an ordered sequence of position-indexed morphs (Crysmann 2002) or (ii) model the template as a vector of phonological strings, the elements of the vector being linearized by separate rules. We argue that both approaches account equally well for the data at hand, but that (i) has two advantages: it easily scales up to diverse morph ordering phenomena; it is readily compatible with an abstractive conception of morphology (Blevins, 2006).

References

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