International Morphology Meeting, Budapest, 11-14 June 1998

Suppletive periphrasis, symphrasis, and morphological theory

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Goals of this talk:
– examine the notion of periphrasis
  (rare in morphological theory; exception: Börjars et al. 1997)
– make some necessary conceptual distinctions
– establish the concept of *symphrasis* (= 'anti-periphrasis')
– argue for a morphology-syntax continuum

1. What is periphrasis?

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periphrasis: the use of a multi-word expression where one would expect a single word in an inflectional paradigm
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two kinds of periphrasis: (cf. Aerts 1967, Rosén 1992)

(A) Suppletive periphrasis: **(= gap-filling periphrasis)**
  supplies forms for inflectional paradigms that cannot be formed
  as regular single-word forms
    e.g. English *warm – warmer*
        beautiful – more beautiful (*beautifuller)

(B) Categorial periphrasis:
  creates a new category which is not necessarily part of the
  inflectional paradigm
    e.g. English *will cut*   (Future)
    e.g. Italian *viene tagliato*   'is cut'   (Passive)
        sto taglando   'I'm cutting'   (Progressive)
        comincio a tagliare 'I begin to cut'   (Inceptive)

Hockett (1958:212): periphrasis "can be recognized only where there is a clear gap in the inflectional patterns, which the phrases serve to fill"

2. Two types of suppletive periphrasis

(A1) Lexical suppletive periphrasis   **(creates lexical generality):**

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(1) Latin comparative degree: different adjective classes

positive	*longus*	*felix*	*arduus*	*idoneus*
comparative	*longior*	*felic-ior*	*[magis arduus]*	*[magis idoneus]*
	'long'	'happy'	'steep'	'suitable'
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(2) Romanian case inflection: different noun classes

	masc. common n.	fem. proper n.	masc. proper n.
base form	*prieten-ul*	*Ana*	*Petre*
oblique case	*prieten-ul-ui*	*Anei*	*[lui Petre]*
	'the friend'	'Ana'	'Petre'

(3) Maltese possessive forms (1st person singular): different noun classes

base form	*dar*	*id*	*ktieb*
possessive form	*dar-i*	*id-i*	*[ktieb tiegì-i]*
	'house'	'hand'	'book'

(A2) Paradigmatic suppletive periphrasis (creates paradigm symmetry):

(4) Latin aspects and voices: 3rd person singular of *scribere* 'write'

	present	imperfect	perfect	pluperfect
active	*scribit*	*scribebat*	*scripsit*	*scripserat*
passive	*scribitur*	*scribebatur*	*[scriptum est]*	*[scriptum erat]*

(5) Russian tenses and aspects: 3rd person singular of *(s)delat'* 'do'

	present	past	future
perfective	—	*s-delal*	*s-delaet*
imperfective	*delaet*	*delal*	*[budet delat']*

(6) Classical Greek middle perfect inflection (*grápho* 'write')

	singular	plural
1st	*gégram-mai* *gegrám-metha*	
2nd	*gégrap-sai*	*gégraph-the*
3rd	*gégrap-tai*	*[gegram-ménoi eisí]*

3. The structural paradigmatic model

Suppletive periphrasis, like suppletion, serves as an argument for a paradigmatic view of inflection (cf. BÖRJARS, VINCENT & CHAPMAN 1997):

	−perfect	+perfect
+active	*lauda-t*	*lauda-vi-t*
−active	*lauda-tur*	*

	+present	−present
1SG	*	*all-ai-s*
1PL	*all-ons*	*all-i-ons*

TABLE 1: Latin *laudare* 'praise'   **TABLE 2: French *aller* 'go'**

There are no regular bound forms for [+perfect, −active] of *laudare*, and no regular bound form for [+present, 1SG] of *aller*.

The lexicon supplies the suppletive [+present, 1SG] form of *andare*: **vais**
The syntax supplies a periphrastic [+perfect, −active] form of *laudare*:

       laudatum   **est**
     [−active]   [3SG]
     [+perfect] [+present]

4. Symphrasis (or: "anti-periphrasis")

Sometimes the single-word forms in a paradigm that create the slots filled by periphrastic forms are a clear **minority**.

E.g., in Lezgian (HASPELMATH 1993), **18 verbs** allow prefixal negation of verbal nouns, all other verbs have "periphrastic negation" (cf. also Maltese in 3):

(7) Lezgian negated verbal noun: different verb classes				
affirmative	*awun*	*xun*	*gun*	*c&üxün*
negative	*t-awun*	*ta-xun*	*ta-gun*	*[c&üxün t-awun]*
	'do'	'become'	'give'	'wash'

In Afrikaans, **a handful of verbs** have bound past tense forms:

(8) Afrikaans past tense forms (DONALDSON 1993:222)					
present tense	*is*	*weet*	*kan*	*werk*	*begin*
past tense *was*	*wis*	*kon*	*[het gewerk]*		*[het begin]*
	'be'	'know'	'can'	'work'	'begin'

In Spanish, **4 adjectives** have bound comparative forms:

(9) Spanish comparative				
positive	*bueno*	*pequeño*	*oscuro*	*caliente*
comparative	*mejor*	*menor*	*[más oscuro]*	*[más caliente]*
	'good'	'little'	'dark'	'warm'

In Hungarian, **1 verb** has a bound future form:

(10) Hungarian future tense (3rd person singular)			
infinitive	*lenni*	*írni*	*felelni*
future tense	*lesz*	*[fog írni]*	*[fog felelni]*
	'be'	'write'	'answer'

So few single-word forms are hardly sufficient to create slots for the whole word-class.

 Instead: The multi-word forms are the unmarked forms and create a **syntactic paradigm**. Some "slots" in this syntactic paradigm may be filled by **symphrastic forms** (= **anti-periphrastic forms**), i.e. single-word forms that "supply" the "gaps" in the syntactic paradigm.

Paradigmatic suppletive "periphrasis":
more periphrastic slots than bound slots

(11) Hungarian subject-object inflection (*kér-* 'ask'; *engem* 'me', *téged* 'you')			
	1OBJ	2OBJ	3OBJ
1SG.SUBJ	—	*kér-lek*	*kér-em*
2SG.SUBJ	*[engem kér-ed]*	—	*kér-ed*
3SG.SUBJ	*[engem kér-i]*	*[téged kér-i]*	*kér-i*
1PL.SUBJ	—	*[téged kér-jük]*	*kér-jük*
2PL.SUBJ	*[engem kér-itek]*	—	*kér-itek*
3PL.SUBJ	*[engem kér-ik]*	*[téged kér-ik]*	*kér-ik*

An exemplary **symphrasis analysis** of Hungarian (symphrastic form in brackets):

(12) Hungarian future tense (3rd person singular)			
infinitive	*írni*	*felelni*	*lenni*
future tense	*fog írni*	*fog felelni*	*[lesz]*
	'write'	'answer'	'be'

≈ ***periphrastic/single-word*** (if the multi-word forms are the marked minority)
≈ ***multi-word/symphrastic*** (if the single-word forms are the marked minority)

But can we assume **syntactic paradigms**, like morphological paradigms?

5. The symphrasis-periphrasis continuum

Periphrastic pole   **Symphrastic pole**
<———————————————————-————————————————————>

| *magis idoneus* | *gegramménoi eisí* | *more beautiful* | *c&üxüin taw.* | *más oscuro* |
| *long-ior* | *pepaídeu-ntai* | *warm-er* | *ta-xun* | *mejor* |

multi-word forms are few   single-word forms are few
multi-word forms are recent innovations   single-word forms are old relics

The periphrasis-symphrasis continuum is further evidence for the syntax-morphology continuum.

6. Blocking through entrenchment

symphrasis (not suppletive **periphrasis**) is analogous to **suppletion:**

periphrasis: fills what would otherwise be a gap (*magis idoneus*)
            *idoneior: impossible for phonological reasons

suppletion: does not fill a gap (English *went* / French *(je) vais*)
            *goed/(j)'*alle: impossible because blocked

symphrasis: does not fill a gap (Lezgian *ta-xun* 'not becoming')
            *xun t-awun: impossible because blocked

            morphology blocks syntax!

Mechanism of **<u>blocking</u>** (cf. ANSHEN & ARONOFF 1988, RAINER 1988)**:**

only **frequent** lexemes show suppletion, because
   • high frequency leads to a high degree of **lexical strength** (BYBEE 1985) or
      entrenchment (LANGACKER 1987)**;** and
   • high degree of entrenchment allows **rapid lexical access**; hence
   • **suppletive** forms of **frequent** items are **more efficient** in processing
      (cf. also WERNER 1977, 1987)

The same mechanism is responsible for symphrasis:
   morphological forms are more deeply entrenched than syntactic
   combinations (cf. Bybee 1995)

Like suppletion, symphrasis occurs only with the most frequent words:

('be', 'do', 'have', 'know'; 'good', 'bad', 'small', 'big'
(periphrasis occurs with rarer words)

Regular morphology, too, has a blocking effect:
cf. Latin *magis longus* 'more long'

			(irregular:)	**(regular:)**	**(irregular:)**
symphrasis:	Hungarian	'will write'		*fog írni*	
		'will be'	*lesz*	>>> (**fog lenni*)	
suppletion:	English	'played'		*play-ed*	
		'went'	*went*	>>> (**go-ed*)	
periphrasis:	Latin	'longer'		*long-ior*	>>> (**magis longus*)
		'more fitting'			*magis idoneus*

<———————————————————————————>
more entrenched   less entrenched

direction of blocking >>> >>> >>> >>> >>>

FIGURE 1: *Symphrasis, suppletion, periphrasis*
("X >>> Y" = X blocks Y")

Blocking is independent of the **regularity** or **irregularity** of the blocking item –
it only depends on the degree of **entrenchment** (ultimately, frequency)

7. Periphrasis/symphrasis in syntax

Suppletive periphrasis (or symphrasis) is found in syntax as well:

(13) English polar question formation:

affirmative	*you can*	*you have*	*you came*	*you played*
polar interrog.	*can you?*	*have you?*	[*did you come?*]	[*did you play?*]
			(**came you?*)	(**played you?*)

(14) English comparative formation:

positive	*warm*	*nice*	*beautiful*	*relevant*
comparative	*warm-er*	*nic-er*	[*more beautiful*]	[*more relevant*]
			(**beautifuller*)	(**relevanter*)

Note: **high frequency** of inversion verbs, not only in English:

Italian dialects of Veneto (cf. POLETTO 1993):
Paduan: **verb-subject clitic inversion**, all verbs:
            El vien. ('He comes'); *Vien-lo?* ('Does he come?')

Venetian: only a **restricted class** of verbs:
            Dove va-lo?   'Where does he go?'   [*Cossa ze che el magna?*]
            Cossa fa-lo?   'What does he do?' (**Cossa magne-lo?*)

Cf. Grimshaw's (1997) implausible constraint NO LEXICAL HEAD MOVEMENT)

8. Conclusion

periphrasis and symphrasis are independent of the syntax-morphology division:

			more morphological <———————————> *more syntactic*			
		root	morphemes	new morphemes	words	more words
English	'worse'	*worse* >>> (*badder)				
Spanish	'darker'					*más oscuro*
	'better'	*mejor*				>>> (*más bueno)
Latin	'more fit'					*magis idoneus*
	'longer'		*long-ior*			>>> (*magis longus)
English	'heaped'			*heap-ed*		
	'kept'		*kep-t* >>>	(*keep-ed)		
English	'did you come?'					*did you come?*
	'are you?'					*are you?* >>> (*did you be?)

more entrenched <———————————> *less entrenched*

FIGURE 2.

result: a morphology-like view of syntax:
paradigms, blocking, periphrasis, symphrasis extended to syntax

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