How Does Morphotactics Help Us Understand the Content of Polyfunctional Markers

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Based on the canonical approach of morphology, there is a one-to-one correspondence between form and content. in this ideal model, distinct contents are expressed by distinct morphological forms, and same contents are expressed by the same morphology. However, there are recurrent deviations from a canonical morphology in world languages. This study investigates polyfunctionality as one sort of deviation from a canonical inflectional marking. Ackerman and Bonami (2017: 1) define polyfunctional markers as the same class of grammatical markers that can assume related but different functions in different grammatical contexts. Building upon this idea, I examine object and subject agreement markers in Laki. This language based on Windfuhr (2009) and Anonby (2004) belongs to the Northwestern branch of Iranian languages. In this language there are three sets of person and number markers: One is a set of clitics (hereafter group A) that mark {1 and 2 sg} and {1-3 pl}. The other one is a set of suffixes (hereafter group B) that mark {1 and 2 sg} and {1-3 pl}. The third one is the suffix *–i*, that marks {3 sg}. The distribution of these markers is what is remarkable. Group A marks subject agreement of the preterite transitive verbs, and pronominal object in present tense. Group B marks subject agreement in present tense, and pronominal object in preterite transitive verbs. They also mark subject agreement in preterite intransitive verbs. Suffix *–i* marks subject agreement of {3sg} in preterite transitive and present verbs. It serves as the pronominal object for present verbs as well.

Table 1. Group A. {subj trans pret} ∧ {obj prs}

=em	{1sg}
=et	{2sg}
=man	{1pl}
=tan	{2pl}
=an	{3pl}

Table 2. Group B. {subj prs} ∧ {obj trans pret} ∧{subj intrans pret}

em	{1sg}
in	{2sg}
imen	{1pl}
inan	{2pl}
en	{3pl}

-i: {3sg subj trans pret} ∧ {3sg obj trans prs} ∧ {3sg subj prs}

These exponents (morphological forms) are associated with the morphosyntactic properties they realize via the application of rules of exponence, ordered into rule blocks (Anderson: 1992 and Stump: 2001). Following Stump's analysis (2017) of Swahili verbal concords, I consider two distinct types of content for these agreement markers: intrinsic content is an invariable core content which remains intact regardless of the position of the inflectional marker in rule blocks. Polyfunctional markers in Laki all realize the invariable content that is τ {αPER βNUM}. τ subsumes the person and number properties of the subject and object. On the other hand, the affix position of these markers in rule blocks determines the positional content they realize. Their positional content, with respect to other inflectional markers (mood, polarity, aspect, etc.) is determined by the morphotactics of this language. So without the consideration of the position of these morphological forms within the morphotactics of this language, we will not be able to distinguish these markers in terms of the content they express in the morphology of Laki. The distinction between intrinsic and positional exponence suggests that rules of exponence should actually consist of two independent parts: exponence declarations which specify intrinsic content and sequencing rules which specify an exponent's linear ordering and its positional content. By sequencing rules, we are able to account for Laki polyfunctional markers and the positional content they realize based on the slots they occupy in word forms, Data in 1, 2, and 3 illustrate it.

di-m=et
see.PRET.OBJ.1SG=SUB.1SG
'You saw me.'

2. m-own-em=et
HAB.see.PRS-SUB.1SG-OBJ.2SG
'I see you.'

3. ward-n=i
eat.PRET. OBJ.3PL=SUB.3SG
'He ate them.'

Table 3. Verbal morphotactics of Laki

-1	-2	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
Subj *be-* **Neg** *na-* *ne-*	**habitual** *ma-*		**voice** *-ya*	**past perf** *-u* **past subj** *-a* **prs sub=B** *-em* *-in* *-imen* *-inan* *-en* *-i*	**prs obj=A** *=em* *=et* *=man* *=tan* *=an* -i **pret obj=B** *-em* *-in* *-imen* *-inan* *-en*	**pret sub=A** *=em* *=et* *=man* *=tan* *=an* -i	**prs perf** *-a* *-asi* *-iya*

The intrinsic exponence declaration and sequencing rules of subject and object markers in particular, are as follows:

x. Intrinsic Exponence Declaration of Group A, B, and -i

⟦ *em*, {1 sg}] ⟧	⟦ *man*, {1 pl} ⟧	Group A
⟦ *et*, {2 sg} ⟧	⟦ *tan*, {2 pl} ⟧	
	⟦ *an*, {3 pl} ⟧	

⟦ *i*, {3 sg} ⟧

⟦ *em*, {1 sg}] ⟧	⟦ *imen*, {1 pl} ⟧	Group B
⟦ *in*, {2 sg} ⟧	⟦ *inan*, {2 pl} ⟧	
	⟦ *en*, {3 pl} ⟧	

Sequencing Rules of Group A, B, and -i

Block +2.

Where ⟦B, {τ}⟧ is an exponence declaration in x, the block +2 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦B, {{sub prs} ⊔ τ} ⟧).
Where ⟦–*i*, {τ}⟧ is an exponence declaration in x, the block +2 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦-*i*, {{sub prs} ⊔ τ} ⟧).

Block +3.

Where ⟦A, {τ}⟧, is an exponence declaration in x, the block +3 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦A, {{obj prs} ⊔ τ} ⟧).
Where ⟦B, {τ}⟧, is an exponence declaration in x, the block +3 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦B, {{obj pret} ⊔ τ} ⟧).
Where ⟦–*i*, {τ}⟧, is an exponence declaration in x, the block +3 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦-*i*, {{obj prs} ⊔ τ} ⟧).

Block +4.

Where ⟦A, {τ}⟧, is an exponence declaration in x, the block +4 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦A, {{sub pret} ⊔ τ} ⟧).
Where ⟦–*i*, {τ}⟧, is an exponence declaration in x, the block +4 sequencing rule is Suff (⟦-*i*, {{sub trans pret} ⊔ τ} ⟧).

References

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