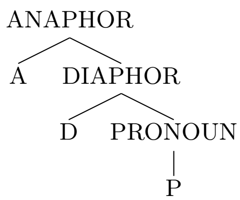
Investigating pseudo-ABA patterns of syncretism in the pronominal domain

Author's Name, *Author's University*

1. Introduction. This presentation investigates pseudo-ABA patterns of syncretism in pronominal structures. It is widely acknowledged that pronominals have internal structure (e.g. Cardinaletti & Starke 1996, 1999, Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002, 2017). Middleton 2019 investigates binding restrictions on pronominals and argues that anaphors, diaphors[1] and pronouns exist in a containment structure (1). This structure is motivated by the absence of ABA syncretisms in pronominal forms in a study of 87 languages. Three languages, however, have pseudo-ABA syncretism patterns: Babanki, Malayalam and Yoruba (2). These languages present a problem for the structure in (1), as they could arguably be analysed as having an A-B-CA pattern. The mystery is how the exponent for P is present within the anaphor, but absent in the diaphor.

(1)



(2)

	Babanki	Malayalam	Yoruba
ANA	ə̀wénə́ **wén**	avan**avan**	ara **rẹ́**
DIA	jì	tan	òun
PRO	**wén**	**avan**	**rẹ́**

Two problems are resolved here: first, the exponents that optimally capture all and only the attested data, and second, the cyclic/non-cyclic status of the functional heads A and D. I argue that a null-allomorphy analysis of pseudo-ABA patterns overgenerates (§2); portmanteau spans capture the data exactly (§3); they also work in a cyclic analysis (§4); explaining variable exponence in pronominals requires a non-cyclic analysis (§5); hence, A and D are not cyclic nodes (§6). The analysis presented is couched in the Distributed Morphology framework (Halle & Marantz 1993).

2. *Null allomorphy. The pseudo-ABA patterns can be accounted for with the exponents in (3). Now consider replacing the exponent for A in (3) with the hypothetical exponent for A in (4).

(3) Possible exponents of Yoruba[2]

P	⇔	rẹ́	P	⇔	∅ / [K [D [__]]]
D	⇔	òun	D	⇔	∅ / [A [__ [P]]]
A	**⇔**	**ara**			

(4) A hypothetical exponent for A

A	**⇔**	**∅**

Replacing the phonologically overt exponent for A with a phonologically null one results in a true ABA pattern for Yoruba, contra the findings in Middleton 2019; this is exactly the kind of pattern the theory must fail to generate. There are 17 logically possible patterns of syncretism that a tree structure like (1) can exhibit; all of them can be generated in a theory that assumes unrestricted phonologically null exponents. But none of the languages in Middleton's sample demonstrates a true ABA pattern of syncretism, and only Babanki, Malayalam and Yoruba demonstrate pseudo-ABA patterns. Of the 17 logically possible patterns, only eight are attested.

3. A non-cyclic analysis. I propose that the explanation for pseudo-ABA patterns of syncretism is exponents that Spell Out structurally adjacent nodes (*spans*; Svenonius 2012). The diaphors *jì*, *tan* and *òun* appear to be completely suppletive, exponing [D [P]]. If they expone this larger structure, then *ə̀wénə́*, the reduplicated morpheme *avan*, and *ara* cannot Spell Out A alone, as the exponents for P would never be a component of the anaphor forms. The exponents *ə̀wénə́*, the reduplicated *avan*, and *ara* must therefore Spell Out a structure that is complex enough to 'beat' the exponents of [D [P]] for insertion without 'beating' the P exponents. This is possible if the structure these exponents Spell Out is [A [D]] (5). These exponents derive the pseudo-ABA patterns exactly.

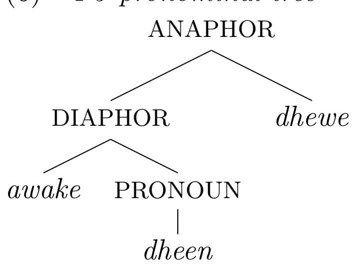
[1]Diaphor = non-locally bound variable. [2]∅ = phonologically null exponent. [3]↯ = impoverishment.

(5)

Babanki			Malayalam			Yoruba		
P	⇔	wén	P	⇔	avan	P	⇔	rẹ́
[D [P]]	⇔	jì	[D [P]]	⇔	tan	[D [P]]	⇔	òun
[A [D]]	⇔	əwénə́	[A [D]]	⇔	REDUP	[A [D]]	⇔	ara

4. A cyclic analysis. The above analysis assumes that the nodes A and D are not cyclic, and the domain for Vocabulary Insertion is the complete pronominal tree. But if A and D *are* cyclic nodes, Bobaljik's 2012 cyclic analysis of patterns of suppletion in the adjectival domain will account for the syncretism data with identical results. In a nutshell, Bobaljik's analysis goes like this: It is traditionally assumed that Spell Out occurs cyclically, starting from the bottom of the structure and working up. The trigger for Spell Out is a cyclic node. A cyclic node triggers Spell Out of its complement; Spell Out includes rules of exponence. If A and D are cyclic nodes, we need some way to suspend Spell Out, because if these are cyclic nodes, it is impossible to insert the portmanteaux for [A [D]]. Bobaljik proposes the *Suspension Condition*: Spell Out of a domain, D, is suspended, if a rule of exponence spans D. A rule spans D if it involves X and Y in the configuration $[[X]_D\ Y]_{D+1}$. The adoption of the Suspension Condition and the restriction on rules of exponence allows the grammar to generate the pseudo-ABA patterns, without allowing for true ABA patterns.

(6) *PJ pronominal tree*



(7) *PJ Impoverishment*[3]
a. $^{\%}$D → ↯
b. $^{\%}$A → ↯

5. Variable exponence. Consider the Peranakan Javanese (PJ) pronominals (6). Cole *et al* 2007 report that *awake dheen* and *dheen* can both expone the diaphor, while *awake dheen dhewe* and *awake dheen* can both expone the anaphor. There is no semantic or syntactic predictor for this variation (Cole *et al* 2007). This is unexpected under the Maximal Subset Principle (MSP, Kiparsky 1973), since more highly specified exponents should always be inserted when competing for a position with a less specified exponent. In every case of variable exponence known, one exponent Spells Out a proper subset of the features of the other; the variable exponence is never between exponents that Spell Out identical sets of features. Thus, there must be some mechanism that can neutralise the MSP. I adopt Probablistic Impoverishment: impoverishment rules enact a structural change probabilistically when their structural description is met (Nevins & Parrott 2010). That is, impoverishment occurs a percentage of the time, rather than every time, generating the variation. The PJ variation requires two rules of impoverishment, deleting D and A (7). However, *dheen* never expones the anaphor, so the application of these rules must be restricted. To capture this, I adopt an adaptation of the Russian Doll Principle (RDP; only the outermost layer of the structure is available for impoverishment, Ackema & Neeleman 2018). In addition, the impoverishment rules must be ordered: (7a) applies before (7b). These constraints allow all and only the attested variation to be generated.

6. Conclusion. This analysis of variable exponence is only compatible with a theory in which A and D are *not* cyclic nodes, as they must be deleted *after* the pronominal has been built, but *before* Vocabulary Insertion. To see why, consider deriving PJ's anaphor where A and D are cyclic nodes: P would merge with D, and D being cyclic would trigger Spell Out of P: *dheen*. According to the RDP, the outermost layer of the tree is available for impoverishment, so the rule of impoverishment that deletes D can apply. The tree, currently composed of the exponent *dheen* and the empty node which hosted D, then merges with A, which is exponed by *dhewe* when the structure merges with the Case head K. This results in the PJ anaphor being Spelled Out as *dheen dhewe*, which is unattested in PJ. Since the analysis in which A and D are cyclic nodes derives unattested data, but the one in which they aren't derives exactly the attested data, I conclude that A and D are *not* cyclic nodes.