Paradigm levelling in Spanish as a case of Syncretism
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Spanish has three verb classes (I-II-III), characterised by three different theme vowels (*-a, -e, -i*). These class distinctions show different types of paradigm levelling. A first type of levelling (L1) is total, in that it neutralises all the verb class distinctionsIt is found in 1SG.IND, e.g. *cantar-canto* 'I sing'; *temer-temo* 'I fear'; *partir-parto* 'I leave'. A second type is partial, in that it only neutralises the distinction between Classes II-III, setting them apart against Class I. There are two different types of partial levelling, one in the present indicative (L2), and one in the present subjunctive (L3). L2 is only found in selected person/number combinations, whereas L3 is found in all person/number combinations of Class II-III. I will propose a nanosyntactic analysis of the levelling phenomenon in terms of the Superset Principle, i.e. the fact that a lexical item may realise less structure than is contained in its lexical entry. In this manner, roots may 'shrink' to become the same size as roots of a different verb class, thus giving rise to the levelling phenomenon. The three patterns of levelling described here will lead me to claim that verbs of Class III may appear in three different sizes.