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Towards a Typology of Inflectional Classes

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- We use the term *inflectional classes* (IC) when there is more than one paradigm for the same morphological category which has an inflectional realization.
- A typical example of IC are declensional types in several Indo-European languages (Baltic, Slavic, Italic, Greek, Old Indian, Old Iranian, Old Armenian, Hittite, Germanic, Old Irish)

‘An inflectional class is a set of lexemes whose members each select the same set of inflectional realizations.’ (Aronoff 1994: 64)

Declension of Russian feminine nouns in singular

	A	B
N.	kaša	myš
G.	kaši	myši
D.	kaše	myši
A.	kašu	myš
I.	kašej	myšju
Pr.	kaše	myši

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Declension of Lithuanian feminine nouns in singular

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N.	valià	pilìs
G.	vãlios	pilies
D.	vãliai	pìliai
A.	vãliaų	pìlių
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3) affix suppletion: allomorphy that cannot be described in phonological or morphophonological terms.

Fusion/Inflection

(corrispondingly non existing): high value
of the same parameters.

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- What is the relation of the notion IC to the previous notions?

Inflectional classes are a very special realization of affix suppletion.

Theoretical questions:

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- Defining notions *cumulation, fusion, agglutination, inflection, inflectional (category / language)*.
- What is the relation of notion IC to the previous notions?
- **Our proposal: to consider IC as an independent parameter.**

Theoretical approaches to IC:

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- **Canonical typology:** Each linguistic phenomenon is thought to have a 'canonical' realisation which matches all relevant criteria, but it might not exist in real languages. Linguistic phenomena actually attested deviate from the 'ideal' in concrete parameters. *'We extrapolate from what there is to what there might be, in order to define the theoretical space'* (Corbett 2009). This approach is convenient for typology.

Canonical approach to IC

University of Surrey, Surrey morphology group.

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/englishandlanguages/research/smg/>

**Its project: Endangered complexity: inflectional classes in
Oto-Manguean languages (since 2012).**

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/englishandlanguages/research/smg/researchprojects/endangeredcomplexity/>

**Dustan Brown, Matthew Baerman, Greville Gorbett, Enrique
Palancar, Timothy Feist**

From the project description:

“To date our knowledge of inflectional classes is largely based on European languages, and as such is limited by their typological characteristics”.

“In functional terms inflectional classes are apparently useless: the variation is quite independent of meaning, and must simply be memorized. But such systems are widely found across the languages of world, are highly structured and remarkably resilient over time”.

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Principle 1: canonical inflectional classes are fully comparable and are distinguished as clearly as is possible

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- 3) *Within* a canonical IC each member behaves identically (no stem and other alternations).
- 4) *Within* a canonical IC each paradigm cell is of equal status.

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- 4) The distribution of lexical items over IC is not motivated by Part of Speech.
- 5) The distribution of lexical items over IC is not motivated by pragmatics.

Almost canonical IC according to Corbett: Burmeso (an isolate, New Guinea):

Six nominal classes, two object agreement paradigms of verb:

da timar g-ih-i-maru

1SG bat.SG II.SG-see-TODAY'S.PAST

'I saw a bat.'

da timnarid s-ih-i-maru

1SG bat.PL II.PL-see-TODAY'S.PAST

'I saw some bats.'

da kwehia g-ih-i-maru

1SG frog.SG III.SG -see-TODAY'S.PAST

'I saw a frog.'

da kwehorudo j-ih-i-maru

1SG frog.PL III.PL-see-TODAY'S.PAST

'I saw some frogs.'

IC in Burmeso:

	assignment	IC 1		IC 2	
		e.g. <i>-ihi-</i> 'see'		e.g. <i>'-akwa-</i> bite	
		SG	PL	SG	PL
I	male	<i>j-</i>	<i>s-</i>	<i>b-</i>	<i>t-</i>
II	female, animate	<i>g-</i>	<i>s-</i>	<i>n-</i>	<i>t-</i>
III	miscellaneous	<i>g-</i>	<i>j-</i>	<i>n-</i>	<i>b-</i>
IV	mass nouns	<i>j-</i>	<i>j-</i>	<i>b-</i>	<i>b-</i>
V	banana, sago tree	<i>j-</i>	<i>g-</i>	<i>b-</i>	<i>n-</i>
VI	arrows, coconuts	<i>g-</i>	<i>g-</i>	<i>n-</i>	<i>n-</i>

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- IC are hardly a phenomenon found areally. IC require a long period of morphological evolution within a language to appear and develop. IC represent morphological *complexity*.
- IC are likely to be found in genetically related languages. If one language of a family has IC, others also might.
- On the other hand, closely related languages can differ in this parameter.

In which languages has the presence of IC been observed and described as such? (Aronoff, 1994 + works by Surrey morphology group):

- Indo-European languages (declension, subject conjugation) (Aronoff, 1994)
- Semitic languages (binyanim) (Aronoff, 1994)
- Papuan languages of New Guinea (Corbett 2009, Aronoff 1994): object marking on verb.
- Oto-Mangean languages (Otomi): conjugation (Palancar, 2012)

Examples from non Indo-European languages of Eurasia.
Subject conjugation in Meadow Mari:
 (http://grammar.marlamuter.com/morf_verb.php)

	Person and Number	I class	II class
Present-future	1 sg.	-am	-em
	2 sg.	-at	-et
	3 sg.	-eš	-a
	1 pl.	-əna	-enda
	2 pl.	-əda	-eda
	3 pl.	-ət	-aat
Past (evidenced)	1 sg.	-əṃ	-əšəṃ
	2 sg.	-əč	-əšəč
	3 sg.	-o (-ö, -e)	-əš
	1 pl.	-na	-əšna
	2 pl.	-da	-əšda
	3 pl.	-əč	-əšt

**Nominal declension in Svan (Kartvalian):
(Testelets 1988)**

11 declension types. A fragment:

	Ia 'house'	IIa 'bull'
Nom.	kor	qän
Dat.	kor-s	qan-w
Narr.	kor-d	qan-wom
Instr.	kor-šw	qan-wš
Transf.	kor-d	qan-wd
Gen,	kor-äš	qan-w(e)miš

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Georgian (Kartvalian) indirect object marking on verb (3 sg. of subject, 3 sg. of direct object, present tense):

<i>Person and number of ind. object</i>	I class 'write'	II class 'buy'
1 ед.	m-c'er-s	mi-qid-ul-ob-s
2 ед.	g-c'er-s	gi-qid-ul-ob-s
3 ед.	s-c'er-s	u-qid-ul-ob-s
1 мн.	gv-c'er-s	gvi-qid-ul-ob-s

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Possessive prefixes in Burushaski (isolate) (Berger 1998: 44)

	<i>1 sg.</i>	<i>2 sg.</i>	
a.	<i>a-yáṭis</i>	<i>gu-yáṭis</i>	'head'
b.	<i>á-l'cin</i>	<i>gú-l'cin</i>	'eye'
c.	<i>á-miṣ</i>	<i>gó-miṣ</i>	'finger'
d.	<i>áa-ṣki</i>	<i>góo-ṣki</i>	'neck'

Tense paradigms in Ashti (Dargwa, Dagestan) (Belyaev, in print)

Marker	I	II	III
3sg. of the Preterite	TR: -aj INTR: -i	-aj	-in
Preterite's thematic vowel	-a-	-i-	
3sg. of the General Present	TR: -u- INTR: -a-	TR: -a INTR: -u	-an
Thematic vowel of the General Present	TR: -i- INTR: -u-	TR: -a- INTR: -u-	-a
3sg. of the Real Conditional	-a:-li		-anni
Present stem	-ul		-un
Present participle	-u		
Past participle	-ib		
Perfect	-ip:i		-unni
Imperative	-a/-i		-in

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- **In which categories are IC possible? (declension, subject and object conjugation, possessive declension)**
- **What are the diachronical sources of IC? (fusion, desemantization)**
- **Is borrowing of IC possible?**

**Sometimes yes:
declension of nouns of Greek origin in Latin**

	Lat.	Anc. Greek	Latin standard decl.
N.	Antigonē	Αντογόνη	lupa
G.	Antigonēs	Αντιγόνης	lupae
D.	Antigonae	Αντιγόνη	lupae
Ac c.	Antigonēn	Αντογόνην	lupam
Abl	Antigonē	—	lupā

Declention of the word *Christ* in Russian:

	Greek	Russian	Russian standard
N.	Χριστός	Xristos	programmist
G.	Χριστοῦ	Xrista	programmista
D.	Χριστῷ	Xristu	programmistu
Ac.	Χριστόν	Xrista	programmista
I.		Xristom	programmistom
Pr.		Xriste	programmiste

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