
Morphomes and variation: a Scandinavian perspective

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Aronoff's (1994) *morphome* has been found useful also in diachrony, in particular in the study of Romance languages (e.g. Maiden 2016, Loporcaro 2013). Recently, however, this "morphomic approach" has been criticised (e.g. by Bowern 2015). In my talk, I'll submit that some of this criticism is misplaced. The arguments involve Scandinavian mostly, but some will involve Romance.

I wish to reflect on how some historical changes proceed, to see if the morphome concept is useful there. The indefinite plural of a subset of neuters has been changed, in varieties of Danish, Swedish and Norwegian, from having no suffix to having the suffix *-r*, and this is usually analysed as analogy from feminines. In this way, a mixed (heteroclitic) paradigm arises. However, some varieties that had got *-r* in these neuters innovate again, replacing *-r* by *-n*, and this innovation must be given another account – but, intriguingly, it targets the same neuters. Also in many varieties, there is a next step after the introduction of *-r*, a change involving the definite plural. Another case we shall go into is the introduction, in the definite sg., of the old masculine suffix *-a* in some few feminines in East Norwegian. Again, this results in a "mixed" paradigm. The diachronic evidence indicates that we should not see inflectional classes as 'flags' (cf. e.g. Dammal et al. 2010, Enger 2010). I shall ask what implications, if any, this has for the morphome.

An over-zealous hunt for morphomes may lead us to neglect semantic relations, yet some semantic relations traditionally postulated are perhaps rather morphomic. If time allows, we shall consider that, too.

References: • Aronoff, M. (1994): *Morphology by itself*. MIT. • Bowern, C. (2015): Diachrony. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Inflection*. OUP, 233–250. • Dammal, A. (2011): *Konjugationsklassenwandel*. De Gruyter. • Dammal, A. et al. (2010): Strong verb category levelling. *JGL* 22(4), 337–359. • Enger, H.-O. (2010): How do words change their inflection class? *LgSci* 32(3), 366–379. • Loporcaro, M. (2013): Morphomes in Sardinian Verb inflection. In: *The boundaries of pure morphology*. OUP, 137–160. • Maiden, M. (2016): Some lessons from history. In: *The morphome debate*. OUP, 33–64.