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## The dog didn't bark, the noun didn't inflect: a typology of significant absences

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Uninflectedness is newsworthy because the phenomenon is unexpected and significant. We should ask, then, why we expect inflectedness, and why its lack is significant. This leads us to distinguish it from related phenomena, including syncretism and defectiveness. And while full uninflectedness has a history of discussion, we should not treat it as an absolute: rather, there is an interesting canonical scale from fully inflected to uninflected. Items may be uninflected for a part of their paradigm (thus Polish *muzeum* 'museum' is uninflected in the singular only, an unusual type of heteroclisis), while some Macedonian adjectives show a featural split, being uninflected for gender though inflected for number. And when items move towards being inflected, the change may affect specific uninflected cells of the paradigm.

Since uninflectedness is an unexpected phenomenon within inflectional morphology, we might assume it would have no consequences outside inflection. And indeed, derivation may remain unaffected. Thus Upper Sorbian *abbé* 'priest' does not inflect, but it derives the possessive *abbéowý* 'priest's'. In syntax, however, while uninflected items often fit smoothly into their expected syntactic slot, this is not always the case. Wechsler & Zlatić (2013: 115-169) argue that uninflected nouns in Serbo-Croat are restricted in the contexts in which they can occur. They cannot occur in a nominal phrase assigned dative or instrumental, unless the case value is morphologically realized by some other element in the phrase.

Thus uninflectedness varies along a range of criteria, to be carefully defined. These criteria will be exemplified from two main sources. First, Slavonic languages, since these show dramatic variation, and have attracted considerable interest. The second main source will be Dagestanian languages, since these can have substantial numbers (even majorities) of uninflecting items, within parts of speech which can inflect. Given this, we need to refine our definitions.

Uninflected items are indeed surprising. They are also more varied than most accounts allow for, and it is only when we map out the typological possibilities that we can appreciate their significance.

**References:** • Wechsler, S. & L. Zlatić (2003). *The Many Faces of Agreement*. Stanford: CSLI.