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**ARBEITSGRUPPE 8 | WORKSHOP 8**

Raum | Room: S 24, Seminargebäude

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**Uninflectedness**

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Work on inflectional morphology often starts out from the canonical baseline that it is regular and productive (Corbett 2015). In canonical inflection, all lexemes in a given word class have the same inflectional properties. However, many languages have subsets of lexemes that do not inflect, while the rest of the items in the same word class do. For example, while Russian nouns typically inflect for two numbers and six cases, the noun pal'to 'coat' has the same form for all number and case combinations. Likewise, Italian nouns typically have singular and plural forms, but there are uninflected nouns as well, e.g. gorilla. Examples of uninflectedness can also be found in agreement, where some lexemes may not inflect as targets while others do, for example, in the Nakh-Dagestanian languages Archi, Ingush and Tsez only a subset of verbs agree.

Uninflectedness raises (i) systemic, (ii) typological and (iii) diachronic questions:

- (i) It contributes to the question of partial rules (Spencer 2020). Answering questions such as how and why languages use partial rule systems when it would appear simpler to have general rules will advance our knowledge of the role of grammatical rules in human language.
- (ii) Uninflectedness has not been investigated from a typological perspective. We need to ask how widespread it is and whether it displays typological distributions.
- (iii) Languages are systems in flux, and to reduce the cognitive load that a partial rule system entails we might assume that uninflectedness should be ironed out over time and all items become either inflecting or non-inflecting. We need to verify whether this is the case.

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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 nameworthy 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 syntcretism 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 heteroclis), 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 *abbéowy* '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.

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## The conditions of uninflectedness in nouns in the Slavic languages

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In Slavic languages the major word classes (nouns, adjectives and verbs) inflect for several grammatical categories, such as case, number, gender, animacy, gradation; person, tense, mood; verbs also form participles and adverbial participles, leading to up to 170 forms, e.g., in Russian. However, there are whole classes of lexemes that belong to the word classes mentioned but do not show any markers of grammatical categories, i.e., are uninflected.

In my talk I will first consider how to define uninflectedness under such circumstances: While this is unproblematic for nouns, it is more complicated for adjectives and verbs. As a second step I will show which classes of lexemes are most often affected by uninflectedness in Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovene and Slovak. These are mainly proper names, loans, abbreviations, i.e., mostly nouns. I will demonstrate that there is a continuum for each class between a pole with the highest degree of uninflectedness and the opposite pole, where uninflectedness is almost non-existent. These continua correlate reversely with other continua of uninflectedness (numeral, compound formation).

I will argue that the lack of integration of the mentioned nouns into the inflectional system is related to constitutive features of declension classes, such as stem-ending, base form, grammatical gender. These features can be more or less restrictive. Thus some languages (e.g., Russian) show a higher degree of uninflectedness in nouns, while others are more permissive (e.g., Slovene). However, this permissiveness does not apply to all features equally: noun classes with feminine gender as a constitutive feature are often more restrictive than those with masculine gender as to stem-structure or base-form.

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## Determining the relationship between uninflectedness, overabundance and defectiveness

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We aim to understand whether differences in the three phenomena are reflected in their distributional behaviour, using a distributional semantics approach (see, e.g., Firth, 1968; Landauer and Dumais, 1997; Mikolov et al., 2013). We look at phenomena in Czech, Polish, Russian, Finnish.

Czech: The Czech noun *rande* ‘date’ is uninflected. However, it (and others) can adopt t-stem inflections (e.g. like *kotě* ‘kitten’). This leads to overabundance, but it appears that neither the uninflected form *rande* nor the t-stem form *randat* is entirely acceptable in the gen. pl.

Polish: Uninflectedness may be partial, as with *muzeum* ‘museum’ (Kotyczka 1980: 95, 105-6; Tokarski 1993: 257).

Russian: defectiveness (gen. pl. of nouns) may be associated with peculiar distributional semantics. The relevant class uses the stem as exponent of the gen. pl (Chuang et al 2022).

Finnish: pronoun forms such as *tuolla* (abl. sg.) may be used as uninflected adverbial forms.

Defectiveness in the Czech example suggests that emergence of paradigmatic contrasts may change the status of a bare stem from being considered merely uninflected. However, emergence of paradigmatic contrasts seems to be unproblematic in the case of the partially uninflected Polish example. The Russian data suggests that defectiveness may involve an issue with associating distributional features with bare stems, while the Finnish data suggests that distributional divergence that does not impinge on certainty around paradigm structure of the same lexeme may be less of a problem. An understanding of the distributional properties of the features associated with these phenomena will provide a clearer picture beyond the basic assumption of featural inertness usually associated with uninflectedness.

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## Deflection of proper names in Romanian

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Proper names can differ from common nouns with respect to inflection. In some languages, proper names and common nouns exhibit distinct case paradigms, as in Sinyar (Boyeldieu 2019). In other languages, proper names display a smaller case paradigm than common nouns, as in German, which underwent deflection in the seventeenth century (Nübling 2012; Ackermann 2018). Deflection contributes to the onymic schema constancy, according to which the shape of proper names is preserved in order to enable their recognition and processing (Nübling 2005: 50–51).

While deflection of proper names has been studied in German historical linguistics, it has not received much attention in Romance linguistics. This paper provides an account of deflection of personal names and place names in Romanian. First, personal are inflected differently from place names and human common nouns. More specifically, personal names block the suffixed definite article in the nominative-accusative (*Ion* ‘John’) and take the propriial article *lui* for the dative-genitive (*lui Ion* ‘of/to John’) while place names and human common nouns take the suffixed definite article in the nominative-accusative (*București-ul* ‘Bucharest’, *băiat-ul* ‘the boy’) and dative-genitive (*București-ului* ‘of/to Bucharest’, *băiat-ului* ‘of/to the boy’). Second, foreign place names avoid inflection. For example, the city name *San Francisco* is not inflected in the nominative-accusative and dative-genitive. Compare *centrul Bucureștiului* ‘the centre of Bucharest’ (with the suffixed definite article) to *centrul San Francisco* ‘the centre of San Francisco’ (without the suffixed definite article). In summary, it will be shown that in Romanian, deflection is unleashed by factors such as proper name class and foreignness.

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## Uninflectedness of modifiers in composite noun-noun units in Polish

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This paper discusses the occurrence of uninflected constituents of Polish composite lexemes. Noun-noun multiword units, commonly referred to as juxtapositions (e.g. Szymanek 2010), generally require both of their constituents to be inflected (for case and number) in Polish, as in (1).

- (1) *ps-a przewodnik-a* (dog-GEN.SG guide-GEN.SG) ‘(of a) guide dog’  
The right-hand (modifier) components in the juxtapositions in (2-3) are borrowings functioning as uninflectable nouns in Polish.
- (2) *pożar-ami zombie* (fire-INS.PL zombie) ‘(with) zombie fires’
- (3) *ps-a dingo* (dog-GEN.SG dingo) ‘(of a) dingo’

In contrast, the uninflectedness of the right-hand constituents of the composite units in (4-5) can be treated as a case of constructional uninflectability (Spencer 2020). Note that the lexemes *cud* ‘miracle’ and *widmo* ‘ghost’ are inflected in (6).

- (4) *odżywk-i cud* (conditioner-NOM.PL miracle.NOM.SG) ‘miracle conditioners’
- (5) *autor-em widm-o* (author-INS.SG ghost-NOM.SG) ‘(with a) ghost writer’
- (6) a. *niezwykl-e cud-a* (extraordinary-NOM.PL miracle-NOM.PL) ‘extraordinary miracles’  
b. *przerażając-ym widm-em* (frightening-INS.SG ghost-INS.SG) ‘(with a) frightening ghost’

A minor construction schema (cf. Booij 2010) can be proposed to account for the occurrence of the default form (NOM.SG) of selected nouns in the modifier position of Polish juxtapositions. Such a schema would represent the obligatory pattern for left-headed structures with the modifier *cud* ‘miracle’ and an optional pattern for composite units with the modifier *widmo* ‘ghost’ (see 7).

- (7) *miast-a widm-o* (town-NOM.PL ghost-NOM.SG), or  
*miast-a widm-a* (town-NOM.PL ghost-NOM.PL) ‘ghost towns’

Thus, Polish juxtapositions discussed above show some resemblance to Italian attributive-appositive compound nouns, in which the non-head constituent allows for variability in form (Radimský 2015).

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• Radimský, J. (2015). *Noun + noun compounds in Italian*. České Budějovice: Jihočeská Univerzita.  
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## Uninflectedness as a rule in Polish, an inflected language

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The paper focuses on one group of Polish uninflected nouns, considering their exceptional regularity, diachronic development and attitudes of speakers.

Polish uninflected nouns stand out against a background of rich inflection (7 cases, 2 numbers, several declension classes). Most of them can be captured by regularities such as: poor match between phonetic shape and existing inflectional classes (e.g. *kiwi*, *alibi*, *Peru*) or denotation of culturally distant concepts, including foreign names (e.g. *karate*, *San Francisco*, *Sukarno*). Still, usage varies from noun to noun, e.g. both *papaja* and *mango* refer to exotic fruit, both fit productive declension classes, but the latter remains uninflected.

However, uninflectedness is a perfectly regular feature of Polish animate nouns of masculine morphonetic shape used for female referents. The group encompasses common nouns (e.g. *profesor*, *minister*, *architekt*) and most surnames other than adjectival ones ending in *-ska/-cka/-dzka*. Uninflectedness is a signal of feminine gender in such structures (Obrębska- Jabłońska 1949) although it is questionable whether the uninflected feminine forms and their inflected masculine counterparts have developed into separate lexemes (cf. Łaziński 2005).

These feminine forms are relatively new in Polish (since c. 1900) and have always been in competition with normally inflected words derived by productive (cf. Szpyra-Kozłowska 2019) feminine suffixes, e.g. *lekarka* ‘female medical doctor’. The choice between the uninflected and inflected forms for female referents was heatedly debated in the early 20th century and is so again today. Interestingly, the strong ideological undertones have virtually swapped sides between the two periods (cf. Woźniak 2014). One possible outcome of the current debate could be the demise of the uninflected pattern, the “ironing out” of this robust instance of uninflectedness.

Yet, it is only the common nouns (and not the surnames) that are the subject of ideological controversy and the two subgroups of uninflected feminine forms are likely to develop differently. This suggests that the fate of uninflected words may well be shaped most by factors other than systemic pressure and cognitive load associated with uninflectedness as such.

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## Some concepts and consequences of uninflectedness

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Uninflectability raises three sets of questions:

- (1) What counts as ‘inflection’?
- (2) Relationship to paradigm organization (esp. defectivity, syncretism)?
- (3) Relationship to
  - (3a) lexical insertion; (3b) uninflecting lexemes; (3c) constructional uninflectability.
- (1) Do uninflectable lexemes resist
  - (i) derivational morphology? No: *kino* ⇒ *kinoficirovat* ‘to supply with cinemas’, *kinošnik/ica* ‘cinema worker (M/F)’
  - (ii) transpositions, e.g. denominal relational adjectives? Perhaps not: *kinošnyj* ‘pertaining to the cinema’, *pal'tovyj* ‘pertaining to overcoats’, German *Rosaheit* ‘pinkness’
  - (iii) evaluative morphology? Not necessarily: *pal'tiško* ‘(cheap) overcoat (pej.)’, *kinoška* ‘(squalid) cinema (pej.)’. [Paucity of uninflectable verbs makes it hard to investigate inflection-like clitics, a-structure alternations, periphrases; but note, indeclinable adjectives generally allow analytic comparatives/superlatives.]

(2) Is uninflectability really just mass syncretism? Is there any way to describe (lexical, constructional) uninflectability without an explicit appeal to the paradigm concept (i.e. is uninflectability a fatal challenge to models like DM)?

(3) Spencer’s (2020) Default Exponence Principle for uninflectable lexemes is flawed. I therefore propose a model of lexical insertion based on a coindexing mechanism defined over pairings of cells in a lexeme’s form/realized paradigm and syntactic terminals, which can be circumvented by parochial stipulation for defective lexemes. For an uninflecting lexeme (e.g. an English preposition) we define a virtual form/realized paradigm occupied by the lexeme’s (sole, unique) root but without any feature specification. An uninflectable lexeme has a full content paradigm but no (true) form/realized paradigm, as in Spencer (2020), so in order to undergo lexical insertion it is mapped to a virtual form/realized paradigm, as though it were a truly uninflecting lexeme. In (full) constructional uninflectability the syntax lacks expected morphosyntactic feature specifications so no pairing with the actual form/realized paradigm cells is possible, and so again the lexeme has to be treated as though it were uninflecting.

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## Emerging uninflectedness in French clipped verbs

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Productive truncation in French nouns (*pneumatique* -> *pneu*; *introduction* -> *intro*) is long established and well documented (Kerleroux 1999). Recent years have seen the emergence of a parallel truncation process in verbs (*je me déconnecte* -> *je me déco*). The combination of apocope and of the suffixal nature French conjugation provide an interesting new source of uninflectedness (Spencer 2020).

We devise a computational method for retrieving truncated verbs from a corpus and analyse the retrieved forms in order to extract generalisations on the phenomenon. We first extract all verbal tokens in the corpus FrWaC that are a substring of an inflected verb in the French lexicon (*déco* gets extracted since it's a substring of *déconnecter*, *décorer*, *décoder* ...). The full forms matched by the substring constitute potential matches for the corresponding full form. The best match is chosen by evaluating how well it fits the context, on the basis of methods from distributional semantics (Lenci 2018). Human evaluation reveals that the best match is indeed the correct corresponding full form in 88% of the cases.

The conclusion of the computational corpus study is that the phenomenon is productive, not limited to a subset of lexicalised truncated forms, nor to a restricted set of paradigm cells. From the point of view of theoretical morphology, it is interesting to note that, while inflectional suffixes are fully lost in truncated verbs, stem allomorphy sometimes leads to the preservation of partial inflectional properties. For instance, among truncated forms of AVOIR, *nous av* signals a present or imperfect while *j'aur* signals a future or conditional. This raises interesting questions on the division of labour between stem allomorphy and affixal exponence in inflection systems, which we will discuss in the talk.

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## On the emergence of uninflectedness: The case of incipient verbal inflection dropping in present-day French

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The adaptation of English-origin verbs to French inflectional paradigms seems to have been undiscussed until the present day due to its systematic nature. This systematicity is, however, to be questioned in view of the recent emergence of uninflected variants for a large number of these verbs (e.g., *je viens de play cette vidéo en salle de pause le son à fond* 'I have just play this video in the break room with the volume full on'). Our data from a corpus of 50 million French tweets show that the lack of inflection on English-origin verbs is a quantitatively remarkable fact, with thousands of daily attestations in 2021, and the distribution between inflected and uninflected infinitive forms in a sample of 50 verbs is quite striking as — except for two of them, *spam(mer)* and *check(er)* — all verbs are predominantly uninflected, and overwhelmingly so (over 90%) for a vast majority of neologisms and a large minority of established verbs.

Remarkably, verbal uninflectedness in present-day French is not limited to borrowings from English. It appears repeatedly at the margins of the lexicon, in colloquial language of slang origin such as *verlan* and borrowings from Romani, as well as in the newly emerged French-based contact languages of western Africa Nouchi (Ahua 2008, Atsé N'Cho 2014) and Camfranglais (Bogni 2018). Regarding the latter, Bogni claims that the verbs (mostly borrowed from English, Cameroonian Pidgin English, and Duala) which do not display inflection, especially in the infinitive and the past participle, belong to a new, "fourth-group" class of conjugation. Uninflectedness thus appears to be a marker of limited assimilation, flagging foreignness and peripherality. In the context of social media communication, it might also be that it is used as a marker of textual genre and in-group membership.

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**French « voilà »:  
an uninflectable form arising from an inflecting verb**

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The French particle *voilà* clearly does not inflect. However, with regard to its syntactic behavior, this is quite surprising: The various configurations in which it occurs suggest that *voilà* actually behaves like a verb (cf. amongst others Bergen/Plauché 2005; Morin 1985; Moignet 1974), and should therefore belong to the group of inflecting expressions par excellence. In particular, *voilà* takes complements, assigns accusative case (which becomes visible when looking at the type of clitics adjoined to it), and can even be embedded as the only element of a relative clause.

From a diachronic point of view, the origins of the particle lie in the combination of the imperative form of the verb *voir* ('to see') with the locative adverb *là* ('there'). It was hence originally a multiword construction that shows certain similarities to a phenomenon dubbed "constructional uninflectedness" by Spencer (2020, 148). But in the case of Modern French *voilà*, can the first, verbal part (*voi-*) still be considered as an inflecting form representing an imperative? The working hypothesis for this paper will be that even this last trace of inflection got lost over time, given the fact that during the medieval period, the expressions *veez la*, containing the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural imperative and *vei la*, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular imperative, both exist (cf. Oppermann-Marsaux 2007). First results of a corpus research suggest that after a period of parallel use, the singular imperative form is the one usually used to create the merged particle around the 16<sup>th</sup> century, yet without being restricted in number and thus taking over the function of both formerly inflected forms.

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## Loss of inflection in the diachrony of French nouns

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This case study contributes a diachronic perspective on the development of uninflectedness and its interaction with other non-canonical phenomena.

Modern French nouns have a CONTENT PARADIGM (inventory of morphosyntactic feature sets required by syntax, Stump 2016) with 2 cells, corresponding to the values ‘singular’/‘plural’ of the single feature NUMBER; this contrast is discernable via agreement patterns (1). Some nouns, e.g. *journal* ‘newspaper’, have two distinct forms in the REALISED PARADIGM (array of inflectional wordforms, Stump 2016). However, nouns of the majority inflectional class, e.g. *livre* ‘book’, display SYNCRETISM for number; as the realised paradigm thus has only a single form, such nouns may also be considered UNINFLECTABLE in the sense of Spencer (2020).

- (1) a. *Ce livre/journal est intéressant.*  
 sə livʁ/ʒuʁnal      ɛ    ɛ̃tɛʁɛsɑ̃  
 this.M.SG book.SG/newspaper.SG is interesting.M.SG
- b. *Ces livres/journaux sont intéressants.*  
 se livʁ/ʒuʁno      sɑ̃ ɛ̃tɛʁɛsɑ̃  
 these.M.PL book.PL/newspaper.PL are interesting.M.PL

These patterns result from progressive LOSS OF INFLECTION (Baerman & Sims-Williams 2021). Mediaeval French nouns had a content paradigm of four cells, with two values each for the features NUMBER and CASE (Schøsler 1984, 2013); their Latin etyma had a content paradigm of twelve cells, with two values of NUMBER and six values of CASE. Loss occurs via a complex series of incremental changes, correlated with inflectional class, phonological shape and gender; the loss of case contrasts involves regular sound change, analogy and syntactic change, while the loss of number contrasts is principally due to sound change. Contrast in number is consistently retained longer than contrast in case. It is also noteworthy that, while the overall trend is towards reduction, change is not fast-paced: lexical items with and without given contrasts coexist over several centuries.

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## Uninflectedness as a factor in agreement loss

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Among the (weakly) inflecting-fusional Romance languages, some have gone a long way towards generalizing an isolating word structure, making uninflectedness the rule rather than the exception, at least in some areas of grammar. The most widely known case is French nominal morphology, but a large subset of the Italo-Romance varieties – both north and south of Tuscany, whose dialects provided the basis for the standard language – parallels French in having reduced distinctions in inflection in general, in such a way that agreement has come to be signalled much less systematically than it used to be in Latin and still is in standard Italian.

In the present paper, elaborating on previous work (see e.g. Loporcaro 2000a-b; Loporcaro & Paciaroni 2021), I show in which ways uninflectedness makes its way into these Romance varieties and in which ways it comes to variously interact with agreement. The main focus will be on verb agreement with the direct object, whose vehicle is a participle. In this area of grammar, most Romance languages display four-cell paradigms which may show syncretisms (along patterns classified in Loporcaro 2011) or uninflectability, usually as a product of regular sound change (the case mentioned above). Spencer (2020: 143) stretches this notion a little bit, to cover also cases in which just one feature among those otherwise expressed cumulatively in the inflection of words from a given part of speech (its “inflectional signature”), fails to be expressed. Another way in which the notion can be extended is to cover asymmetrical marking of distinct features in multiple exponence: in Italo-Romance dialects, thus, one can observe uninflecting roots vs. inflecting endings in one and the same participle. I will explore the consequences for agreement.

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## Uninflectedness in Italian nouns and adjectives

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We address the development of uninflectedness over time in Italian nouns and adjectives, contributing to a typology of factors that allow us to predict whether an item is uninflectable (see Fedden 2019 for a similar approach).

D’Achille & Thornton (2003) have shown that uninflectedness in Italian nouns has increased in the course of time (Table 1):

	13 <sup>th</sup> century	end of 20 <sup>th</sup> century
tokens	2.4%	8.6%
lexemes	2.7%	9.5%

Table 1 – Percentage of uninflected noun tokens and lexemes in a small corpus of 13th and late 20th century Italian

Even the factors that correlate with a noun’s uninflectability increase and complexify over time: while in the 13th century only nouns ending in a stressed vowel are uninflected, later other classes of nouns become (entirely or partially) uninflectable: nouns ending in unstressed *-e*, in *-i*, in a consonant, and finally masculine nouns in *-a* and feminine nouns in *-o*, where a noun’s gender plays a role in determining uninflectability. These nouns are understood to have developed uninflectability because they contrast with the most system-adequate classes of inflectable nouns in Italian, masculine nouns in *-o* and feminine nouns in *-a*. D’Achille 2005 has further shown that even within these prototypically inflecting classes of nouns some items are now becoming uninflected.

The behaviour of uninflectable Italian adjectives in diachrony has not been investigated. The presentation will fill this gap, by investigating adjectives with the same method used by D’Achille & Thornton 2003. Adjectives, having a four-cell paradigm, have a potential for partial uninflectedness within a single paradigm. Preliminary results seem to point to a smaller rate of uninflectedness in Italian adjectives wrt. nouns; this possibly reflects a more pronounced necessity of having overt exponents of contextual inflectional feature values vs. inherent ones.

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**Diachronic paths to uninflectedness in South Slavonic**

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We argue that ongoing loss of case in Serbian and Bulgarian dialects has caused the system to split into competing co-grammars, one where nouns inflect and one where they do not. This split between ‘forerunners’ (without inflection), and ‘underachievers’ (with inflection), results in partial rules of different nature. Three kinds of split are found, depending on the dialect (illustrated from Bulgarian). Firstly, there is a split between morphological classes: while some retain case distinctions (Class II), others are uninflected:

	Class II ‘mother’	Class I ‘doctor’	Class III ‘salt’	Class IV ‘village’
NOM	<i>majk-a</i>	<i>lekar</i>	<i>sol</i>	<i>selo</i>
ACC	<i>majk-u</i>	<i>lekar</i>	<i>sol</i>	<i>selo</i>

Secondly, classes that retain inflection are nevertheless affected by constructional uninflectedness, as Class II nouns which are uninflected in partitive constructions:

2 (a). Subject		2 (b). Prepositionally governed	2 (c). Partitive
<i>vod-a</i> <i>teče</i>	vs.	<i>čaša</i> s <i>vod-u</i>	<i>čaša</i> <i>vod-a</i>
water-NOM    flows		cup    with    water-ACC	cup    water-NOM
‘Water flows.’		‘A cup with water.’	‘A cup of water.’

Thirdly, an otherwise inflecting morphological class may split on a semantic basis such as human (3a) vs. non-human (3b):

3 a.	<b>Stojan</b>	e	star	vs.	minavame	prez	<b>Stojan-a</b>
	Stojan.NOM	is	old		we.pass	by	Stojan-ACC
	‘Stojan is old’				‘We pass by Stojan.’		
3 b.	<b>Berlin</b>	e	xubav	vs.	minavame	prez	<b>Berlin</b>
	Berlin.NOM	is	nice		we.pass	by	Berlin.NOM
	‘Berlin is nice.’				‘We pass by Berlin.’		

Asymmetry in morphological change leads to the rise of partial synchronic rules: morphological as in (1), syntactic as in (2), or semantic as in (3). These persist over time, and change when a historical process moves to a new phase (for example, if uninflectedness spreads to a group within an inflected morphological class, e. g. to inanimates, splitting this class on a semantic basis). By examining these rules in contemporary dialects, and by arranging them chronologically, we can uncover the fine-grained details of this historical process.

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## The diachronic stability of uninflectedness in Berber

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Most varieties within Berber, a language family indigenous to northern Africa within the Afroasiatic phylum, have a robust system where nouns are inflected for “state”, usually with two choices: the citation form (“free state”), and a marked form (traditionally misnamed the “construct state”) whose precise distribution varies from language to language, sometimes interacting with information structure, but used primarily for postverbal nominatives and objects of prepositions. Depending on the language, this has variously been analysed as a marked-nominative case system (König 2008) or as a typologically unique phenomenon (Mettouchi & Frajzyngier 2013). In all known Berber varieties with “state” inflection, however, it applies only to nouns with a gender-marked prefix, which a substantial minority of nouns do not have; in some cases, even nouns with such a prefix are uninflected for originally phonological reasons (Prasse 1974). Many (not all) nouns borrowed from Arabic or Romance are thus uninflected for state (Kossmann 2013); but so are a number of inherited terms, some of which – like basic kinship terms – are unambiguously reconstructible as such for proto-Berber. There are plausible instances of the extension of state marking to previously uninflected nouns (Brugnatelli 1997), but in no language has this been generalised across the board to make all nouns inflected. Comparative Berber data thus makes it possible to show that selective uninflectedness can be diachronically stable over a period of some two millennia.

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**Kambaata aspect marking:  
On an unusual but systematic case of syncretism**

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Kambaata is a Cushitic language of Ethiopia. It is suffixing and agglutinating-fusional with many portmanteau morphemes and morphological stress. In the verbal system, a primary morphological distinction is made between main and subordinate clause verbs. Fully finite indicative main verb forms are marked for four aspectual categories – imperfective, perfective, perfect and progressive – and 7 different persons/genders/numbers of the subject: 1sg, 2sg, 3m, 3f/3pl, 3hon, 1pl, 2pl/2hon. Overall, Kambaata’s verb inflection is very regular, and the forms of the many paradigms are all predictable if morphophonological rules are considered. One could go as far as to say that the language has no irregular verbs. This does, of course, not mean that Kambaata comes close to the ideal of a language with canonical inflection. Syncretism is widespread (e.g. in negative and subordinate paradigms) and targets different categories (aspect, person/number/gender). This paper concentrates on one particular case of syncretism: in a phonologically definable subclass of verbal lexemes, the perfective/perfect distinction is systematically neutralized in paradigm cells where one would least expect (but most need) it, namely in the cells of 1sg and 3m main verb forms (1), whereas the distinction is made everywhere else, e.g. 3f in (2).

(1) *barg-ée’u* 1. ‘he has added’ = 2. ‘he added’

(2) *barg-itee’u* ‘she has added’ vs. *barg-itóo’u* ‘she added’

Interestingly, the perfect/perfective distinction becomes visible again in a morphosyntactic niche. When the verbs are relativized (for 1sg subjects) or object-marked and then relativized (for 3m subjects), perfect and perfective come to be distinguished prosodically, alone by their different stress patterns (3).

(3) *barg-ée-’e* ‘(which) he has added for me’ vs. *barg-ee-’é* ‘(which) he added for me’

Closely related languages display no syncretism in their perfect/perfective paradigms, which raises the question how the Kambaata case could be explained diachronically.

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**Uninflected verbs: typological trends and a corpus-based comparison of two Nakh-Dagestanian languages**

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This paper presents a typological survey of uninflectedness in verbs, part of a larger typology of differential argument indexing. In a diverse 528-language sample, 70% have verb-argument agreement (n=370). Of these, 45% (n=167) have a system in which agreement is realised differently or not at all under certain conditions.

However, these systems are of different types. Some correspond to sporadic agreement, i.e. agreement is restricted to a subset of verbs, which may be motivated by various factors (see Fedden 2019). Others are more like ‘classic’ differential case marking: only some arguments (e.g. animate, topical) and/or sentences (e.g. main clauses) trigger agreement (Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant 2018, Iemmolo 2011). Still other systems combine both traits, i.e. are both lexically restricted and conditioned by factors other than the verb itself (see e.g. Walker et al. accepted).

In this talk, we focus on the sporadic agreement/verbal uninflectedness type. In particular, we address the role of frequency in their stability (see Fedden 2019: 320). As shown for Tsez (Nakh-Dagestanian), agreeing verbs are much more frequent in a corpus of child-directed speech than non-agreeing verbs (Gagliardi 2012). We investigate the role of frequency in uninflectedness through a comparative analysis of two spoken-language corpora of Nakh-Dagestanian languages with sporadic agreement: Sanzhi Dargwa (Forker & Schiborr 2019) and Chechen (Molochieva & Walker to appear). Both corpora are annotated to allow the comparison of various semantic and pragmatic conditions. A pilot study for Chechen shows that token frequency is indeed the best predictor of agreement.

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**Situating constructional non-inflectedness**

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Spencer (2020) offers a helpful distinction between lexical and constructional non-inflectedness. Inspired by his outline of constructional non-inflectedness, which unites various phenomena not usually considered instances of the same phenomenon, I discuss the place of constructional non-inflectedness among other types of constructional constraints on inflectional behaviour. In particular, I suggest that constructional non-inflectedness is a subclass of the patterns shown in (1), in which a syntactic or morphological construction requires an inflecting word to be in a specific form, e.g. an infinitive, a participle or a stem.

- |     |                          |                                                             |
|-----|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) | [Mod VINF]               | Ich will helfen ‘I want to help’ (German)                   |
|     | [Aux VPTCP]              | Er hat es vergessen ‘He forgot it’ (German)                 |
|     | [Prt VINF/PTCP]!         | Aufpassen/Aufgepasst! ‘Watch out!’ (German)                 |
|     | [Prt komen VINF/PTCP]    | hij komt aanlopen/aangelopen ‘he comes walking’ (Dutch)     |
|     | [A ASTEM [VPTCP[NSTEM]]] | breedgeschouderd ‘broad-shouldered’ (Dutch)                 |
|     | [aan de VSTEM]           | Laten we aan de schrijf gaan. ‘Let’s start writing’ (Dutch) |

Restrictions can be even tighter in constructional idioms, where an inflected form is specified for its phonological shape. Such cases are rarely discussed, an example is (2) (Booij 2005). The plural allomorph in this construction is always *-en*, even in numerals that normally form the plural in *-s*, such as *zeven* ‘seven’.

- (2) [*met z ’n Num-en*] *met z ’n zevenen* ‘the seven of us’ (Dutch)

At the extreme, we see idiomatic constructions with fully fixed forms, as in (3). Forms such as *kith* nor *gebauchpinselt* do not occur outside this construction and hence do not appear in any other inflected form.

- (3) *kith*<sub>SG</sub> and *kin* (English)  
*sich gebauchpinselt*<sub>PTCP</sub> *fühlen* ‘to feel flattered’ (German)

By showing that constructional non-inflectedness can be situated among other types of construction-specific morphology I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

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## The uninflecting word class *rentaishi* in Modern Japanese

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In this paper, I focus on the role of the language-specific and in Western linguistics mostly neglected Japanese word class *rentaishi*, literally 'noun-modifying words', which entered the language as the Japanese equivalents to adjectives in Western fusional languages, and highlight their language-specific and typological relevance for the debate on uninflectedness.

Japanese has a rich inflectional morphology for verbal categories. Grammatical suffixes such as tense, aspect or modality are added to verbs and the two adjective groups and cause stem alternations. Compare: *no-mu* drink-NONPAST 'I drink', *nomi-tai* drink-VOL 'I want to drink', *nome-ba* drink-if 'if I drank'.

Contra this, *rentaishi* can be described as a, not universally accepted, word class through the criteria *restriction to attributive position*, the *inability to inflect and morphological diversity* (compare: *a-ru* 'a certain'; *rei-no* 'mere'), different to the nowadays mostly morphologically based major word classes (Nitta et al. 2000).

I will show that, historically, the introduction of this word class at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is connected to the awareness of Japanese linguists that Japanese adjectives can inflect for tense and appear predicatively, while adjectives in (fusional) Western languages need a copula to do so and do not inflect independently, but in accordance with their head noun (Kim 2006). To fill the gap of dependent attributive modifiers unable to express predicative categories independently, they introduced a dedicated word class to which they added all syntactically restricted and morphologically deficient lexemes.

As an outlook, I discuss whether this word class should be maintained in Japanese, or whether relevant lexemes should be incorporated as defective members of other word classes, those they morphologically belong to (Lehmann and Nishina 2015), or even the group of adjectives they were kept apart from in the first place, and put forth arguments for both sides.

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## Uninflectedness in Amuzgan verbal inflection

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In this paper, I address the problem of "uninflectedness" from a systemic point of view, when a large part of the lexicon of a language with complex and rich inflection is suddenly insensitive to a given morphosyntactic feature.

The case is shown in the Amuzgan branch of the Oto-Manguean stock from Mexico. The data come the Amuzgo language from San Pedro Amuzgos in the state of Oaxaca (Feist et al. 2015). In this language, the verbal lexicon is split into two major classes, which are traditionally referred to as "active" and "inactive" (Stewart & Stewart 2000; Smith-Stark 2002). These labels are descriptively convenient, because many active verbs designate prototypical actions carried out by actor subjects, and many inactive verbs designate states or situations affecting subjects as undergoers, but there are also many cases where the lexical semantics of the verbs is not really helpful in determining class membership, so the phenomenon is best viewed as a case of inflection classes where there are certain semantic tendencies of class membership.

What is interesting for our purposes is that inactive verbs are completely insensitive to the person and number feature of the subject. This is especially surprising when compared to active verbs, where the realization of the person/number feature values of the subject is carried out by a very complex set of five different subsystems, all lexically conditioned, which involve: (i) changes in person/number affixes; (ii) tonal changes; (iii) stem changes with partial or total suppletion; (iv) stem changes displaying glottalization patterns; and (v) stem changes involving vowel harmonization. All these changes split the lexicon of active verbs into subsequent inflection classes, but within them we note that while all active verbs are distinguished from inactive verbs by the subsystem in (i), they can also be subdivided in the sensitivity they present to the changes from (ii) to (v). This opens the question of whether those verbs also show "uninflectedness" at a different level. The general question that Amuzgo proposes to the discussion is the following: given the existence of an inflectional operation that in principle can be applied to any lexeme under certain conditions affecting the form (i.e., that the phonological properties of the base are the right ones), why and how are there lexemes that pass through the inflectional screening without being subject to these operations when they are realized in similar morphosyntactic contexts.

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