

Comments on the paper by Cable

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(1) The goal:

A theory of N-V asymmetries in phonological behaviour.
Without appeal to syntactic categories.

(2) The research strategy:

Derive N-V asymmetries from contingent facts about nouns and verbs, and their associated inflectional morphology.

(Mechanism of choice: uniformity constraints = O-O faithfulness)

(3) Two previous approaches within this strategy:

Base Identity (Kenstowicz 1995)

Korean: verb stems are bound, never occur without an affix
noun stems surface with no affixes (citation form)

The noun stem may be a target for OO faithfulness, because it is an existing, independent word.

The verb stem is not a target for OO faithfulness, because it is not an existing, independent word.

Optimal Paradigms (McCarthy)

Arabic: verb stems must be able to combine with V-initial and C-initial suffixes
noun stems only combine with V-initial inflectional suffixes

Morpheme Structure Constraints apply to restrict verb templates to those that can accommodate C-initial suffixes while still being faithful to the input. *CC]

OP: stems strive to maintain a consistent shape—the shape that is the most compatible with the array of affixes that stem might have to combine with.

(4) Cable's Synthesis:

Both types of OO faith constraints exist, but no individual word will ever be subject to both. If there is an identifiable base, qua independent word, only BI is relevant, but if not, then OO faith is enforced throughout the paradigm (or set of related words) = OP.

The innovation (in part to deal with Itelmen nouns) is that BI may effectively bleed OP, independently of constraint ranking.

- (5) a. t-zəl-čen ‘give’ 1sg>3sg (SP2) epenthesis in environment C_RC
 b. zəl-en ‘give’ -2SG>3SG (SP12) epenthesis throughout paradigm, by OP
- (6) a. ɬxəm ~ ɬxm-ɐʔn ‘sable’ sg, pl
 b. spəl ~ spl-ank ‘wind’ direct, locative¹
 c. ^wtχəz-xʔal ~ ^wtχz-enk ‘road’ ablative, locative

Itelmen nouns: not uniform throughout paradigm: ə~∅
 not faithful to base

Cable: • because nouns have a BASE, OP does not apply
 • but even though having a BASE bleeds OP, BI is itself low-ranked
 OP > schwa > BI FOR ALL CATEGORIES

∴ While verbs are subject to OP, nouns (in effect) are subject to neither OP nor BI.

Fits the research program: depends on contingent properties of each candidate set:
 • having a BASE as an independent word
 • needing to be combinable with C-initial suffixes if OP

The Category Hunch

N-V asymmetries are about morphological categories “noun” “verb” and not about contingent properties of individual lexical items / lexemes / paradigms.

Three arguments from Itelmen that this is the case:

1.1 Bicategory roots.

Itelmen:	some roots occur as verb roots	spəl-	verb ‘be windy’	
	and as simple nouns	spəl	noun ‘wind’	
	most verbs do not:	zəl- ‘give’, ɬəm- ‘kill’		verbs
		*zəl, *ɬəm		*nouns

But the contingent, accidental, fact “my root can surface as a word” has no bearing on the phonological behaviour of the verb root. Schwa epenthesis is exceptionless in verb roots.

Under the base identity strategy, particularly embedded in a version of OP where paradigms are not just inflectionally related words, but the set of all words containing a root, it seems to me that the OP research strategy would lead us to expect the opposite.

¹ This particular form is also attested as % spəl-ank, this is not true for most other alternating forms, especially not the plurals.

1.2 Baseless nouns.

Although most nouns in Itelmen occur unmarked in the singular, there is a sizeable number of nouns that require a singular suffix that is lost in the plural (Volodin 1976, Bobaljik 2003). These nouns lack an identifiable BASE occurring as an independent word. [ṇ = ?n]

(7)	UR	Sg.	Pl.	gloss
	-m /txtu/	txtu-m	txtu-ṇ	'dugout canoe'
	/atno/	atno-m	atno-ṇ	'village' (also 'home')
	-n /kəmlɔ/	kəmlɔ-n	kəmlɔ-ṇ	'grandchild'
	/reβla/	reβla-n	reβla-ṇ	'falcon'
	-ŋ /qtχa/	qtχa-ŋ	qtχi-ṇ	'leg'
	/iʔleβeno/	iʔleβeno-ŋ	iʔleβeno-ṇ	'boat pole'
	-č /p'e/	p'e-č	p'e-ṇ	'child, son'
	/xk'i/	xk'i-č	xk'i-ṇ	'hand'

These include reduplicative nouns.

(8) a. alternating bases: ²		b. non-alternating bases:			
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural		
kəp-kəp	kpə-ṇ	silq-silq	silq-añ	'tooth'	'meat with berries'
k'uφ- k'uφ	k'φə-ṇ	ŋəl-ŋəl	ŋə-ḷ	'claw'	'roe, caviar'
°čəɫx-°čəɫx	°čɫxə-ṇ	tam-tam	tam-eñ	'cowberry'	'growth, tumour'

These nouns are BASE-less, yet fail to pattern with the verbs in showing PU/OP effects.

They show schwa-zero alternations, just like other nouns.

(Note: this is not the sonority-driven alternation, but is rather minimality-driven, cf. (9))

(9)	^w qəsx ~ ^w qsχ-əʔn / ^w qsχ-aj	'dog' sg, pl – pejor.
	čkəp ~ čkp-əʔn	'fungus' sg, pl.

Suspicion: the difference lies in (morpho-)syntactic category, not in whether or not there happens to be a related word from which all other forms are derived.

² I believe that what I transcribe as [u] in the singular is the realization of ə before [φ], likewise [e] is the effect of palatalization induced by [ʃ].

1.3 Transitive-Intransitive differences

Complete opacity in some verbal paradigms, due to interaction (ordering) of epenthesis and devoicing.

(NB. The rule ordering here follows from the cycle and is not stated extrinsically: epenthesis happens on the cycle where it's SD is met, the environment for devoicing arises on the next cycle, hence applies then).

(10)	il	il	Root ('drink')
	[il] z	[il] z	Cycle 1 - Tense
	[il] əz	[il] əz	Epenthesis (Devoicing N/A)
	[iləz] in	[iləz] kičɛn	Cycle 2 - Agreement
	---	ilə <u>ɣ</u> kičɛn	Devoicing (Epenthesis N/A)
		t'iləskičɛn	Output

These are puzzling (for the non-derivational view) as the environment for schwa epenthesis is not met anywhere in the paradigm, yet overapplication of epenthesis applies (see Cable's table 11; Cable's solution invokes *Sympathy*)

(11) /il-z/

___C _[-voice]	il-əs-kičɛn	___s is not an epenthesis environment
___V	il-əz-in	___zV is not an epenthesis environment

This holds for intransitive verbs, and for the "class 2" transitives ($n = ca. 30$). All suffixes are either V-initial or begin with a voiceless consonant (obstruent).

But for the regular transitive verbs, there is a member of the paradigm, $3 > 3$, which takes an n -initial suffix, *-nen*.

(12) sk-əz-nen make-PRES-3>3 'he is making it'

(Because of the Sympathy solution, no particular issue arises for Cable, but consider:

Cable's analysis MINUS the Sympathy part (say Itelmen-prime)

OP effects would arise in regular transitive verbs: the $3 > 3$ suffix (alone among inflectional suffixes) provides the environment for epenthesis, and by OP transmits that to the rest of the paradigm.

But no underapplication (more precisely, no epenthesis) would arise with intransitives and with class II transitives (which have some extra inflectional morphology, all voiceless).

Given Itelmen's morphological inventory, the *normal* case by OP-logic is Itelmen-prime, which would have been described as "transitive verbs are cyclic, but intransitives and class II transitives are not".

This is not a criticism of Cable's specific analysis (I think it makes it easier for transitive verbs), but it illustrates a point that makes me nervous about the research program:

Conclusion:

The OP research strategy (in part):

Derive N-V asymmetries from contingent facts about nouns and verbs, and their associated inflectional morphology.

Arabic is odd in that there is so little inflectional variation (outside of the templates, on which more on Wednesday). It happens to make sense, in Arabic, to talk in general terms about the phonological properties of "the verbal inflections", and the properties of the whole class carry through for each lexeme.

But this makes Arabic the wrong language for trying to motivate the system.

In more normal languages (like Itelmen) the actual phonological shapes of the set of affixes with which a given stem combines will vary among subclasses of nouns and verbs (similarly, whether or not a noun has a free base, or a verb finds a related free base).

To support OP as a theory of N-V distinctions, what needs to be shown is that when the syntactic categories and the contingent phonological properties of paradigm members diverge, it is the latter, not the former driving uniformity effects.

To my eyes (ears?) Itelmen is striking in that it appears to be the (morpho-)syntactic distinction noun/verb that is both necessary and sufficient for predicting cyclicity-effects in syllabification.

Why? I have no idea.

References

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