

Abstract

This project aims at investigating the (Non-)Identity in the “Inflectional Complexes” in Jingpo (alias Kachin), a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Yunnan, China. The Inflectional Complex constitutes an independent prosodic domain and is comprised of the following morphemes: [Number ( $\phi$ =SG., ma=PL.) + Aspect ( $\phi$ =IMPF, sá=PF) + Person (iŋ=1, in=2, à=3, káʔ=1PL.) + Mood Expressive (e.g., ai=DECLARATIVE, ní=INTERROGATIVE)]<sup>1</sup>. Those ostensibly “irregular” Inflectional Complexes are in general regulated by (i) the rhythmic constraint and (ii) feature-specific paradigmatic correspondence constraints (which may render syncretism). On the other hand, “gaps” in inflectional paradigms are also evidenced. Those gaps can be attributed to (i) the anti-homophony constraint and (ii) dispreferred morpheme sequences. I argue that the conflicting requirements can receive a principled analysis couched in the OT framework.

By rhythmic constraint, I mean the possible syllable combinations. That is, the Inflectional Complex tends to be fit into certain syllable combinations. For example, disyllables are preferred to surface as a “minor syllable” (a “parasitic” syllable that has a Că shape or is a syllabic nasal) plus a major syllable. In declaratives (see (1a)), underlying morphemes with a VC shape are mostly “reformed” as C on surface, e.g., [ $\phi$ - $\phi$ -iŋ-ai: SG-IMPF-1-DECL] → /iŋ̃-ŋai/ (1.SG.IMPF.DECL.). As for feature-specific correspondence, for instance, the form *să-ŋai* (1.SG.PF.DECL.) is derived from the UR [ $\phi$ -sá-iŋ-ai: SG-PF-1-DECL], whereas the form *sin-tai* (2.SG.PF.DECL.) has the UR [ $\phi$ -sá-in-ai: SG-IMPF-1-DECL]. The latter is problematic, in that the expected forms \**să-ñ-nai* or *să-nai* are not the actual output, assuming the derivation in the former case (i.e., 1.SG.PF.DECL.). In other words, why is syllable contraction possible in 2.SG.PF.DECL., but not in 1.SG.PF.DECL.? I argue that this asymmetry can be attributed to the requirement that in declaratives, forms with an identical person feature should be as similar as possible in terms of phonological forms. As a result, *sin-tai* (2.SG.PF.DECL.) emerges. In addition, the syllable contraction in *mă-sin-tai* (> [ma-sá-in-ai: PL-PF-2-DECL]) is again triggered by the rhythmic constraint because for a trisyllable, two minor syllables followed by a major syllable are not a possible combination. That’s why \**mă-să-tai* is not the real surface form (cf. *mă-tai* [>ma- $\phi$ -in-ai: PL-IMPF-2-DECL]).

(1)	a. Declaratives				b. Interrogatives			
	IMPERFECTIVE		PERFECTIVE		IMPERFECTIVE		PERFECTIVE	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
1	iŋ̃-ŋai	káʔ-ai	să-ŋai	să-káʔ-ai	àʔ-ní	káʔ-ní	sáʔ-ní	să-káʔ-ní
2	ñ-tai	mă-tai	sin-tai	mă-sin-tai	ñ-ní	mă-ní	să-ní	mă-sin-ní
3	ai	măʔ-ai	sai	mă-sai	àʔ-ní	măʔ-ní	sáʔ-ní	mă-sáʔ-ní

<sup>1</sup> The following symbols and abbreviations are used: High tone=acute accent, mid tone=unmarked, low tone=grave accent, falling tone=caret, minor syllable=macron; 1=first person, 2=second person, 3=third person, SG=singular, PL=plural, PF=perfective, IMPF=imperfective, DECL=declarative, INTERR=Interrogative.

In Interrogatives, a different correspondence relationship is evidenced, however. First/Third person singular forms are homophonous (*àʔ-ní* and *sàʔ-ní* respectively) and in perfectives, second person singular and plural forms are not identical, except the plural morpheme: *sá-ní* vs. *má-sín-ní*. To capture the discrepancy between (1a) and (1b), a feature hierarchy is schematized as follows. According to this hierarchy, perfectives and imperfectives are two distinct groups. As is indicated, Declaratives require all forms marked with an identical subset of features (i.e., person and number) share similar phonological shapes, while in Interrogatives, singular forms pattern with singular forms, and so do plural forms.

(2) Feature-specific correspondence relationships

PERFECTIVE/IMPERFECTIVE					
/				\	
1		2		3	⇐ Declaratives
∧		∧		∧	
SG PL		SG PL		SG PL	⇐ Interrogatives

Finally and crucially, it is evident that the avoidance of homophony occurs only when two forms are specified with different (subsets of) features. This suggests that Feature-specific paradigmatic correspondence constraints outrank the anti-homophony constraint.

**Selected references**

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