

Exploring interactions between directional syncretism and defectiveness

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Paradigmatic gaps (i.e. instances of inflectional defectiveness; e.g. Russian **pobežu* 'I will be victorious') are usually treated as idiosyncratic failures in the productivity of inflection, but in this talk I show that in some languages, paradigmatic gaps enter into feeding and bleeding relationships with syncretism (i.e. one inflected form for two or more distinct morphosyntactic property sets). Defectiveness and syncretism thus engage in the kinds of interactions that are conventionally taken as indicating rule-governed behavior. In this paper I explore the implications of syncretism-defectiveness interactions for formal models of inflectional morphology, showing that declarative and transformational architectures make crucially different predictions in cases of so-called 'directional' syncretism. The data thus add a new dimension to long-standing debates about the morphology-syntax interface and the formal mechanisms underlying syncretism and defectiveness.