

Re-evaluating the relationship between defectivity and overabundance

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There is an increasing body of research on defectivity (paradigm gaps) and overabundance (multiple forms filling the same paradigm cell, termed variously 'competing', 'doublet' or 'rival' forms). Both phenomena reveal important insights into how linguistic morphology works, in particular in relation to where the non-deterministic application of rules is acceptable and to the basis for speakers' certainty about which rules to apply.

Many accounts of defectivity start from the observation that multiple possibilities for the realisation of a form create clashes that lead to a paradigm gap (Hudson 2000), although recent studies have problematised this explanation (Sims 2015). Overabundance has frequently been dealt with in the literature as a case of semantic/functional overdifferentiation or variation conditioned along various axes (Brown 2007, Thornton 2012). However, the existence of non-conditioned overabundance presents an alternative and well-attested outcome in a diverse range of languages (Thornton 2019:224), thereby indicating that defectivity is thus not the only potential resolution of such a clash. More investigation is needed to understand the ways these two phenomena are treated by learners and language users, the theoretical dimensions along which these two phenomena relate to each other, and the ways they can be represented in descriptions of language aimed at the public. This workshop considers the extent to which the associated properties of defectivity and overabundance overlap by bringing together researchers working on paradigm gaps and rival forms in a variety of sub-fields, including corpus linguistics, historical linguistics, child language, language planning, morphology, typology, computational modelling, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. We welcome researchers working on overabundance (morphological variation) and defectivity (paradigm gaps) representing a diverse range of languages and sub-fields.

For submission as part of the workshop proposal, we welcome abstracts of c. 300 words, sent to the workshop conveners (n.bermel@sheffield.ac.uk and dunstan.brown@york.ac.uk) by 8 November 2022. We especially welcome submissions from early-career researchers (PhD students and postdoctoral researchers).

References:

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