

**Workshop description for SLE2023:
Re-evaluating the relationship between defectivity and overabundance
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There is an increasing body of research on defectivity (paradigm gaps, as in the English verb *stride*, which is commonly said to lack a participial form) and overabundance (multiple forms filling the same paradigm cell, termed variously ‘competing’, ‘doublet’ or ‘rival’ forms, as in the English verb *strive*, which commonly has both *striven* and *strived* as participles). 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; yet, to our knowledge, they have only recently begun to be the focus of explicit in-depth comparison and contrast in research.

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. This workshop will address gaps in current research by proposing answers to the following research questions:

- What do these two phenomena (overabundance and defectivity) have in common in terms of how they are treated by learners and language users? At what points do users’ treatment of them diverge?
- What are the key theoretical dimensions along which these two phenomena relate to and diverge from each other?
- In what ways can overabundance and defectivity be represented in descriptions of language aimed at the public?
- What variety of tools and methods (experimental, acquisitional, corpus-based, computational modelling) can we bring to bear in studying defectivity and overabundance as related phenomena?

In the area of language usage, the tension between language use on the individual and collective level has come to the fore. Nikolaev & Bermel (2022) demonstrate an effect connecting defectivity and overabundance in which individuals exhibit uncertainty in their production and evaluation. While any given individual can resolve this uncertainty in favour of one or another form or can successfully identify a function for a form presented, a high degree of uncertainty that is widespread in a population may indicate a defective paradigm cell rather than an overabundant one. This raises issues for those involved in language planning, for whom descriptions are inevitably generalisations across varied populations.

Most language corpora represent population-level language production, and there are debates in the field over whether labels like ‘defective’ and ‘unmotivated variation’ are, when

applied to corpus data, the result of insufficient corpus size, or how, theoretically, we can extract the information needed to distinguish contingent ('transient' or 'accidental') defectivity from intrinsic defectivity in a corpus: even a relatively large corpus contains linguistically inexplicable lacunae that native speakers may encounter rarely but have little difficulty producing or accepting, such as Cz *ovdovět* 'to become a widow (inf.)' vs. the frequent form *ovdověl* 'became a widow (masc.sg.)' (Kovářiková et al. 2020).

Language acquisition studies, on the other hand, derive typically from aggregated data about individual paths of development. Overabundance and defectivity are thus potentially helpful as descriptors for what learners of language (both first-language acquisition and second-language acquisition) encounter in emergent approaches to language. Documentation of FLA gives ample evidence of overabundance in highly inflected languages; a more challenging question has proven to be how defective slots can be identified, given the size and nature of available corpora.

Evidence is emerging that overabundance and defectivity are themselves symptoms of a configuration of distributional and morphological properties. For instance, we know that defectivity in Romance can follow established patterns related to stem suppletion (Boyé and Cabredo Hofherr 2010), while recent work also suggests that idiosyncratic distributional behaviour is associated with defective noun lexemes in Russian (Chuang et al 2022). This raises questions about whether the morphological oddity is itself contributing to these macro-scale distributional patterns, observable only in large amounts of textual data, or whether they reflect a notion of imperfectability in paradigms where it turns out that a felicitous combination of form and meaning/distributional evidence may either allow for multiple forms (overabundance), or create uncertainty around the morphosyntactic values associated with the cell, contributing to paradigm gaps.

Questions also arise about the relationship between overabundance and defectivity in synchronic and diachronic terms. Baerman (2008) suggests that defectiveness may involve knowledge that there is a gap even where the historical circumstances that led to it are no longer there, and it may also be the case that overabundance and defectivity are the result of similar diachronic pathways resulting in different outcomes.

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 linguistic theory and cognitive models, corpus linguistics, historical linguistics, child language, second language acquisition, language planning, morphology, typology, computational modelling, experimental linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. It will draw for its source data on a typologically diverse array of languages from across Europe and the Middle East and be grounded in a variety of theoretical orientations relevant to the questions posed.

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