

Elsewhere morphology and alignment variation: Evidence from Algonquian
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In many languages, clusters of pronominal clitics are subject to constraints that ban certain combinations of features. Clitic clusters that violate these constraints can be repaired by deleting features from one of the clitics, causing the clitic to be realized as an underspecified elsewhere form such as the “spurious *se*” of Spanish (Nevins 2007, 2012), or by “obliterating” the offending clitic altogether, as proposed for Ondarru Basque auxiliary agreement by Arregi & Nevins (2007). A similar phenomenon can occur when multiple agreement heads agree with the same goal. In Bantu languages, “Kinyalolo’s Constraint” states that “AGR on a lower head is inert iff its features are predictable from AGR on a higher head” (Carstens 2005:253, after Kinyalolo 1991). In Kinande, for example, T is not spelled out when C and T both agree with the same goal, and Asp is not spelled out when T and Asp agree with the same goal (Carstens 2005). Such effects can be understood as another instance of obliteration: when adjacent heads have identical phi-features, the lower head is obliterated.

The preceding examples constitute three cells in a typology of morphosyntactic phi-feature dissimilation, as illustrated in Table 1.

REPAIR STRATEGY	LOCATION OF PHI-FEATURES	
	On D (clitics)	On C/T/Asp/ <i>v</i> (agreement)
Obliteration	Ondarru Basque IPL.DAT deletion	Bantu duplicate agreement deletion
Impoverishment	Spanish spurious <i>se</i>	?

Table 1. Repair strategies for illicit phi-feature clusters

In this presentation I illustrate how the fourth cell in the typology can be filled in. Alongside “Kinyalolo effects” in which duplicative agreement heads are entirely suppressed, I argue that there are also cases in which duplicative agreement heads undergo impoverishment and are realized with default morphology. I will show that such effects are pervasive in the Algonquian family (Oxford 2017, 2019). Because the relevant impoverishment operations take place in the context of a rich agreement system, their application gives rise to complex agreement alternations, which, from a descriptive perspective, take the form of a direct-inverse pattern in one context (cf. Béjar & Rezac 2009) and a split-ergative pattern in another context (cf. Bruening 2007). When understood from this perspective, the theoretical implications of the Algonquian agreement patterns may not be as far-reaching as they initially seem. The overall lesson is that in a rich head-marking system, the repair of illicit feature combinations can significantly affect the outward typological appearance of the morphosyntax, causing genuine differences in morphosyntactic alignment to be exaggerated.

References

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