

The synchronic status of morphemes:

Evidence from Latin

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1 Overview of Morphemes

- Morphemes (not to be confused with *morphemes*) were first conceived by Aronoff (1994) to refer any phenomena that are only describable in morphological terms
 - Cannot be accounted for in morphosyntactic terms (e.g. natural classes of syntactic features)
 - Used as evidence of a dedicated morphological component of grammar (an ‘autonomous’ theory of morphology)
- Example in (1): English passive and past participles
 - Both participles are the same and irregular morphology is maintained
 - No phonological explanation
 - No syntactic explanation: [+passive] vs [+past]

- (1) Passive: *It is seen/written/sought/read/torn/brought/taken*
Perfect: *I have seen/written/sought/read/torn/brought/taken*

- Since its original conception, the term morpheme has taken on several meanings
 - cf. Aronoff (2016) for a discussion of the different types of morphemes
- The most widely discussed examples of morphemes have been proposed by Maiden for the Romance verbal system (Maiden 2003, 2004, 2005, 2012, 2017, 2018, etc.)
 - Morphemes are stem-based **paradigmatic templates** onto which various morphological phenomena are mapped
 - Consider the following hypothetical morphomic distribution from Maiden (2018, 12):

	Indicative			Subjunctive		
	Past	Present	Future	Past	Present	Future
1SG	karepi	karepj	perakl	karepn	karepə	karepm
2SG	karepk	karepp	karepl	karepθ	perak	karepl
3SG	perakj	kareps	karepm	karepn	karepa	kareph
1PL	karepi	perakθ	karept	karepv	karepu	karepa
2PL	karepd	karepv	karep	karepv	karepf	peraka
3PL	karepn	karepy	karept	perakv	karepu	karepi
1SG	dytnei	dytnej	detnel	dytnej	dytneə	dytnem
2SG	dytnek	dytnep	dytnel	dytneθ	detne	dytnel
3SG	detnej	dytnes	dytnem	dytnej	dytnea	dytneh
1PL	dytnei	detneθ	dytnet	dytnev	dytneu	dytnea
2PL	dytned	dytnev	dytne	dytnev	dytnef	detnea
3PL	dytnej	dytney	dytnet	detnev	dytneu	dytnei

- * Two verbs have suppletive alternations (*karep~perak*, *dytne~detne*) in an environment that cannot be described in terms of a morphosyntactic natural class
- How should we conceive of these patterns in the mental grammar of speakers?
 - **Morphomic approach:** Morphemes are cognitively real arbitrary patterns that are expressed in paradigms within a morphological component of grammar
 - * Maiden (2003); Stump (2015); Aronoff (2016), etc.
 - **Morpho-syntactic approach:** Morphemes consist of natural classes of morpho-syntactic features (e.g. Embick 2016) or can be accounted for using morpheme specific features (e.g. parasitic features in Trommer 2016)
 - * In these DM approaches, paradigms are not cognitively real objects that can be referenced and/or manipulated
 - * Paradigms are an epiphenomenal result of the combination of underlying syntactic structure, vocabulary items, and any relevant operations such as impoverishment
- **Today's goal:** I want to explore the idea that morphemes imply the existence of paradigms, as is often assumed by the first group
 - Present data from a 'novel' Latin morpheme and provide an account for the pattern in Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993, 1994)
 - Show how DM, a framework that denies the existence of paradigms, can account for this data, while paradigm-heavy approaches cannot
 - * Provide additional evidence that morpheme-based analyses are preferable to those based on stems

2 A morpheme like no other

- Criteria for morphomhood (Maiden 2018):
 - Cannot be accounted for in phonological or syntactic terms (natural classes of syntactic features)
 - Show distributional coherence across several types of morphological expression such as suppletion, affixation, periphrasis, or apophony
- For an example of one of Maiden's morphemes, see the N-PATTERN in the appendix
- Morphemes have been suggested for Latin before, most notably by Aronoff (1994)
 - Specifically the so-called 'third-stem' as discussed by Aronoff (1994); Maiden (2013); Steriade (2016), among others
- However, today I would like to outline a new 'morpheme' that occurs in several irregular verbs

2.1 Irregular verbs

Several irregular verbs in Latin show an alternation between the 2SG, 2PL, 3SG vs the 1SG, 1PL, 3PL:

(2) Morphomic pattern in several irregular Latin verbs

	<i>sum</i>	<i>edō</i>	<i>possum</i>	<i>nōlō</i>	<i>mālō</i>	<i>ferō</i>	<i>volō</i>
	‘be’	‘eat’	‘be able’	‘not want’	‘prefer’	‘bear’	‘want’
1SG	<i>sum</i>	<i>edō</i>	<i>possum</i>	<i>nōlō</i>	<i>mālō</i>	<i>ferō</i>	<i>volō</i>
2SG	<i>es</i>	<i>ēs</i>	<i>potes</i>	<i>nōn vīs</i>	<i>māvīs</i>	<i>fers</i>	<i>vīs</i>
3SG	<i>est</i>	<i>ēst</i>	<i>potest</i>	<i>nōn vult</i>	<i>māvult</i>	<i>fert</i>	<i>vult</i>
1PL	<i>sumus</i>	<i>edimus</i>	<i>possumus</i>	<i>nōlumus</i>	<i>mālumus</i>	<i>ferimus</i>	<i>volumus</i>
2PL	<i>estis</i>	<i>ēstis</i>	<i>potestis</i>	<i>nōn vultis</i>	<i>māvultis</i>	<i>fertis</i>	<i>vultis</i>
3PL	<i>sunt</i>	<i>edunt</i>	<i>possunt</i>	<i>nōlunt</i>	<i>mālunt</i>	<i>ferunt</i>	<i>volunt</i>

2.1.1 Suppletion and stem alternations

- Some of these verbs exhibit suppletion and/or stem alternations along the lines of 2SG, 2PL, 3SG vs 1SG, 1PL, 3PL:
 - sum* ‘I am’ shows an alternation between *es-* vs *su-*
 - edō* ‘I eat’ shows an alternation between *ēs-* vs *ed-*
 - possum* ‘I am able’, a derivative of *sum* (< **potis sum*) shows an alternation between *potes-* vs *possu-*

2.1.2 Periphrasis and Univerbation

- Some verbs show periphrasis and/or univerbation
- The verbs *nōlō* ‘I do not want’ (< **ne volō*) and *mālō* ‘I prefer’ (< **magis volō* ‘I want more’) are derivatives of the verb *volō* ‘I want’ (which we will see shortly)
 - nōlō* ‘I do not want’ shows periphrastic forms in the 2SG, 3SG, 2PL (*nōn vol-*) and univerbated forms in the 1SG, 1PL, 3PL (*nōl-*)
 - mālō* ‘I prefer’ shows partially univerbated forms in the 2SG, 3SG, 2PL (*maṽol-*) and fully univerbated forms in the 1SG, 1PL, 3PL (*māl-*)

2.1.3 Thematicity

- Thematicity refers to the presence of a suffixal vowel that follows roots and precedes agreement
 - Found throughout the older Indo-European languages, but in Latin is limited to the third conjugation (one of the regular verbal classes)
 - In Latin it alternates between *i/u* on a phonological basis
- ferō* ‘I bear’ is in large part a third conjugation verb, but in its present tense, lacks the thematic vowel in the 2SG, 2PL, 3PL and is thus partially athematic
 - Compare *ferō* ‘I bear’ with the synonymous and nearly homophonous *gerō* ‘I bear’:

(3) Present tense of *ferō* ‘I bear’

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1ST	<i>fer-ō</i> < <i>*-o-ō</i>	<i>fer-i-mus</i>
2ND	<i>fer-s</i>	<i>fer-tis</i>
3RD	<i>fer-t</i>	<i>fer-u-nt</i>

(4) Present tense of *gerō* ‘I bear’

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1ST	<i>ger-ō</i> < <i>*-o-ō</i>	<i>ger-i-mus</i>
2ND	<i>ger-i-s</i>	<i>ger-i-tis</i>
3RD	<i>ger-i-t</i>	<i>ger-u-nt</i>

- Despite the fact that **feris*, *feritis*, and **ferit* should be acceptable, they are unattested
- *volō* ‘I want’ can also be included in this category

(5) Present tense of *volō* ‘I want’

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1ST	<i>vol-ō</i> < <i>*-o-ō</i>	<i>vol-u-mus</i>
2ND	<i>vī-s</i>	<i>vul-tis</i>
3RD	<i>vul-t</i>	<i>vol-u-nt</i>

- Some aspects of *volō* ‘I want’ worth mentioning:
 - The suppletive 2SG *vīs*, which has undergone significant historical change (< **vell-s*), remains athematic (*vī+s*)
 - The *vol* vs *vul* distinction is phonological
- Under Maiden’s definition, this distribution of exponents (2SG, 2PL, 3SG vs 1SG, 1PL, 3PL) is **morphomic**
 - The pattern is not based on phonology (e.g. *ferō* vs *gerō*)
 - The pattern does not follow a natural class of morpho-syntactic features
 - Multiple verbs show coherence across different types of morphological phenomena (suppletion, stem alternations, periphrasis, univerbation, thematicity)

3 Analysis in DM

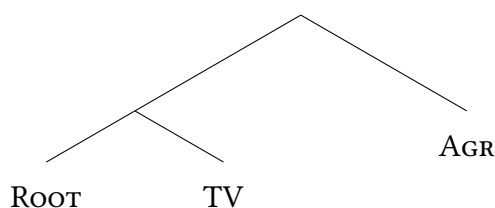
- Following previous accounts for morphomic distributions in DM (Embick 2016; Trommer 2016), I account for this morphome using a two standard mechanisms in Distributed Morphology:
 - Impoverishment
 - Spellout of vocabulary items
- Unlike Trommer (2016), I do not require redundancy rules that insert arbitrary morphomic features
 - While the environment of the morphome is arbitrary, I argue that thematicity (or lack thereof) is a non-arbitrary feature that unites all of these verbs
 - All the forms within the 2SG, 2PL, 3SG are athematic, while the others are thematic
 - * Consider the segmentation in (6):

(6) (A)thematicity in Latin

	<i>sum</i>	<i>edō</i>	<i>possum</i>	<i>nōlō</i>	<i>mālō</i>	<i>ferō</i>	<i>volō</i>
	‘be’	‘eat’	‘be able’	‘not want’	‘prefer’	‘bear’	‘want’
1SG	<i>s-u-m</i>	<i>ed-ō</i>	<i>poss-u-m</i>	<i>nōl-ō</i>	<i>māl-ō</i>	<i>fer-ō</i>	<i>vol-ō</i>
2SG	<i>es</i>	<i>ēs</i>	<i>potes</i>	<i>nōn vī-s</i>	<i>māvī-s</i>	<i>fer-s</i>	<i>vī-s</i>
3SG	<i>es-t</i>	<i>ēs-t</i>	<i>potes-t</i>	<i>nōn vul-t</i>	<i>māvul-t</i>	<i>fer-t</i>	<i>vul-t</i>
1PL	<i>s-u-mus</i>	<i>ed-i-mus</i>	<i>poss-u-mus</i>	<i>nōl-u-mus</i>	<i>māl-u-mus</i>	<i>fer-i-mus</i>	<i>vol-u-mus</i>
2PL	<i>es-tis</i>	<i>ēs-tis</i>	<i>potes-tis</i>	<i>nōn vul-tis</i>	<i>māvul-tis</i>	<i>fer-tis</i>	<i>vul-tis</i>
3PL	<i>s-u-nt</i>	<i>ed-u-nt</i>	<i>poss-u-nt</i>	<i>nōl-u-nt</i>	<i>māl-u-nt</i>	<i>fer-u-nt</i>	<i>vol-u-nt</i>

- Thematicity is not expressed in the 2SG, 2PL, 3SG
 - In other words, feature TV is impoverished in the 2SG, 2PL, 3SG
 - For a very similar account for the impoverishment of theme vowels in Italian, see [Calabrese \(2012, 2015, 2016\)](#)
- I assume the following structure:

(7)



- There are several possible ways to analyze thematic vowel
 - One approach taken by [Calabrese \(2016\)](#) for Italian is that the thematic vowel is morphologically inserted in the derivation when a diacritic [+TV] is present on the root
 - It is also possible to treat the thematic vowel as a verbalizing head (or the expression of some other verb feature), as done by [Embick \(2016\)](#)
- Impoverishment Rule:

(8) $[TV] \rightarrow \emptyset / \{sum, edō, ferō, volō, etc.\} \text{ — } \{[+pres, +ind, -part, -pl]_{AGR}, [+pres, +ind, +part, -auth]_{AGR}\}$

- In other words:
 - Delete the [TV] node in the context of the verbs $\{sum, edō, ferō, volō, etc.\}$ and 2nd person or 3rd singular agreement
- The exponency of the different irregular verbs follow from the spellout of their respective vocabulary items
 - Compare the vocabulary items for *sum* ‘I am’, *edō* ‘I eat’, *ferō*, *volō*

(9) Vocabulary Items for *sum* ‘I am’

a. $v_{be} \leftrightarrow s / __ [TV]$

b. $v_{be} \leftrightarrow es$

(10) Vocabulary Items for *edō* ‘I eat’

a. $v_{eat} \leftrightarrow ed / __ [TV]$

b. $v_{eat} \leftrightarrow \bar{e}s$

(11) Vocabulary Items for *ferō* ‘I bear’

a. $v_{bear} \leftrightarrow fer$

(12) Vocabulary Items for *volō* ‘I want’

a. $v_{want} \leftrightarrow v\bar{i} / __ [+pres, +ind, +part, -pl]$

b. $v_{want} \leftrightarrow vol$

- **Benefits** of this analysis:

- Morpheme is united under the expression of one morpho-syntactic feature: thematicity
- Actual expression of exponency is separated from the morphomic distribution
 - * For *volō*, suppletion of the 2sg is independent from morphomicity, as it is still athematic
 - * For *ferō*, the root is always expressed as *fer*, regardless of whether a cell is in the environment for the morpheme or not

- Crucially, this morpheme is not based on stems, but in terms of athematicity

4 Paradigm Frameworks

- Frameworks such as Word-and-Paradigm Morphology (Blevins 2006, 2016; Blevins et al. 2019) or Paradigm Function Morphology (Stump 2001, 2015) that emphasize the existence of paradigms on the other hand struggle to generalize this morpheme
 - Reliance on stems over morphemes

4.0.1 Brief PFM analysis

- Putting aside inflection, the bulk of exponency in PFM is handled via a **Stem** function, which maps the function of a cell to its phonological form
- The present tense of *ferō* ‘I carry’ requires the stems in (13)
 - The morpheme is encoded directly into the **Stem** function of the *fer* stem via the property set $\sigma : [\{pres\ ind\ 2\} \vee \{pres\ ind\ 3\ sg\}]$

(13) Clauses in the **Stem** function of the present tense of *ferō* ‘to bear’

a. $\mathbf{Stem}(\langle_{FERRE}, \sigma : [\{pres\ ind\ 2\} \vee \{pres\ ind\ 3\ sg\}]\rangle) = fer$

b. $\mathbf{Stem}(\langle_{FERRE}, \sigma : \{\} \rangle) = feri/u$

- Now consider the stems for the present tense of *volō* ‘I want’ in (14)

- The morphomic distribution is only partially referenced by the property set $\sigma : [\{\text{pres ind}\} \wedge [\{2 \text{ pl}\} \vee \{3 \text{ sg}\}]]$

(14) Clauses in the **Stem** function of the present tense of *volō* ‘to want’

- Stem**($\langle \text{VELLE}, \sigma : \{\text{pres ind } 2 \text{ sg}\} \rangle$) = *vī*
- Stem**($\langle \text{VELLE}, \sigma : [\{\text{pres ind}\} \wedge [\{2 \text{ pl}\} \vee \{3 \text{ sg}\}]] \rangle$) = *vol*
- Stem**($\langle \text{VELLE}, \sigma : \{\} \rangle$) = *volu*

- Regardless of how the stem functions are written, the verbs *volō* and *ferō* cannot be united under the same property set
 - The DM analysis unifies all of these verbs under one impoverishment rule
- There is another way to encode morphomic patterns in PFM, namely through the property mapping function **pm_c**
 - While I will not illustrate this now, it produces the incorrect forms (e.g. **feris* instead of expected *fers*)

5 Discussion & Conclusion

- To conclude, I have aimed to demonstrate the following:
 - This pattern in Latin constitutes a ‘morphome’
 - A unified account is possible when the morphome is framed in terms of the impoverishment of thematicity
 - Paradigm-centric frameworks struggle to account for the distribution, contra the expectation of many who work on morphomic distributions.
- PFM cannot provide a unified account for Latin morphome due to its reliance on stems
 - Cannot abstract the athematic property across different stems
 - Fails to capture the following:
 - * both *vī* and *vol* in the 2, SG, 2PL, 3SG are athematic
 - * *vol* is used in both athematic and thematic cells
- I have discussed this issue using PFM as it is the most high-profile W & P framework. The same logic, however, can apply to other paradigmatic models, as they make similar assumptions regarding stems
 - While it is possible to derive the correct cells, there is no coherent ‘morphome’
- Distributed Morphology separates the exponent of a morpheme from the morphome
 - Exponency is driven by Vocabulary Insertion
 - Morphomic distribution is driven by Impoverishment

Takeaway: The fact that Distributed Morphology ‘distributes’ its morphological operations means that it can abstract the impoverishment of a feature separate from the exponency of the individual cells. A stem-based framework cannot do this, as a feature like athematicity must necessarily be integrated into the stem

5.1 Some other thoughts

- Above, I have presented a partial analysis. Some issues that would need to be addressed in a full account:
 - The morphome does not only include the 2SG, 2PL, 3SG but also the infinitive and imperfect subjunctive
 - There are some small verb specific idiosyncrasies (e.g. periphrasis in *nōlō* ‘I do not want’) that I have not discussed in detail
 - I unfortunately do not have a cleaner solution in which $\{ [+pres, +ind, -part, -pl]_{AGR}, [+pres, +ind, +part, -auth]_{AGR} \}$ is simplified to a natural class. However, there are some reasons to believe that morphomic patterns are actually disjunctive underlyingly.
 - While I do not believe that the exact interpretation of the thematic vowel matters for this issue, this pattern might be able to contribute to the discussion of the exact function of the thematic vowel (both in Latin and in other Indo-European languages)

Thank you!

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A N-Pattern

- N-PATTERN in Italian in (15):

– <i>va(d)</i> in singular and 3PL, <i>and</i> in 1PL/2PL	ANDÀRE
– <i>-isc-</i> in singular and 3PL, <i>-Ø-</i> in 1PL/2PL	FINÌRE
– Stress on root in singular and 3PL, on suffix in 1PL/2PL	all verbs
– Diphthong in singular and 3PL, monophthong in 1PL/2PL	MORÌRE

(15) N-PATTERN in Italian

	ANDÀRE 'to go'	FINÌRE 'to finish'	PORTÀRE 'to bear'	MORÌRE 'to die'
1SG	<u>vàd</u> -o	<u>finisc</u> -o	<u>pòr</u> to	<u>muò</u> io
2SG	<u>và</u> -i	<u>finisc</u> -i	<u>pòr</u> ti	<u>muò</u> ri
3SG	<u>và</u>	<u>finisc</u> -e	<u>pòr</u> ta	<u>muò</u> re
1PL	<i>and-iàmo</i>	<i>fin-iàmo</i>	<i>portiàmo</i>	<i>moriàmo</i>
2PL	<i>and-àte</i>	<i>fin-ìte</i>	<i>portàte</i>	<i>morìte</i>
3PL	<u>vàn</u> -no	<u>finisc</u> -ono	<u>pòr</u> tano	<u>muò</u> iono

- The opposition between the 3PL vs 1PL+2PL, the N-PATTERN, is found throughout Romance, showing diachronic *coherence* as seen in (16)-(18):

(16) Suppletion of 'to go'

	ITALIAN	CATALAN	FRENCH	O. SPANISH
1SG	<u>vado</u>	<u>vaig</u>	<u>vais</u>	<u>voy</u>
2SG	<u>vai</u>	<u>vas</u>	<u>vas</u>	<u>vas</u>
3SG	<u>va</u>	<u>va</u>	<u>va</u>	<u>va</u>
1PL	<i>andiamo</i>	<i>anem</i>	<i>allons</i>	<i>imos</i>
2PL	<i>andate</i>	<i>aneu</i>	<i>allez</i>	<i>ides</i>
3PL	<u>vanno</u>	<u>van</u>	<u>vont</u>	<u>van</u>

(17) Verbs with the *-isc-* suffix

	ITALIAN 'to finish'	CATALAN 'to suffer'	ROMANIAN 'to suffer'
1SG	<u>finisc</u> o	<u>patéix</u> o	<u>păţesc</u>
2SG	<u>finisc</u> i	<u>patéix</u> es	<u>păţesc</u> i
3SG	<u>finisc</u> e	<u>patéix</u>	<u>păţesc</u> ă
1PL	<i>finiàmo</i>	<i>patím</i>	<i>păţim</i>
2PL	<i>finite</i>	<i>patío</i>	<i>păţiţi</i>
3PL	<u>finisc</u> ono	<u>patéix</u> en	<u>păţesc</u> ă

(18) Verbs with stress-conditioned apophony

	ITALIAN 'to die'	ROMANIAN 'to come'	FRENCH 'to owe'
1SG	<u>muoio</u>	<u>vin</u>	<u>dois</u>
2SG	<u>muori</u>	<u>vii</u>	<u>dois</u>
3SG	<u>muore</u>	<u>vine</u>	<u>dois</u>
1PL	<i>moriàmo</i>	<i>venim</i>	<i>devons</i>
2PL	<i>morite</i>	<i>veniţi</i>	<i>devez</i>
3PL	<u>muoio</u> no	<u>vin</u>	<u>doiv</u> ent