Evidence for privative persons: clusivity-driven suppletion

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Overview: We argue that suppletion patterns in the context of clusivity are derived through the feature values that represent 1excl ([speaker,-singular]) being properly contained within the feature values that represent 1incl ([speaker,hearer,-singular]). These values allow us to explain the generalisation that 1excl is never suppletive on its own relative to 1sg and 1incl. Furthermore, based on the robustness of this pattern, we argue that the features that make up the category of person are privative, rather than binary (as opposed to number features), explaining why there are no exceptions to this generalisation.

Background: Recent work on suppletion has shown that suppletion follows strict regularities across languages. Specifically, with regard to adjectival suppletion, we see that if either the comparative or superlative are suppletive, then so is the other (Bobaljik 2012). Thus, in positive–comparative–superlative triples only AAA, ABB (*bad-worse-worst*) and ABC (Latin: *bonus-melior-optimus*) are attested, but ABA and AAB are not found. Bobaljik argues convincingly in favour of an analysis where the superlative universally properly contains the comparative:

(1)   [[[root] comparative] superlative]

Suppletion patterns in the context of clusivity: In addition to the previously noted locality restrictions on suppletion, we argue, mainly on the basis of the inclusive/exclusive distinction in pronouns, that markedness also plays a role governing what is able to show suppletion (Moskal 2014). Notably, we observe an asymmetry in suppletion in the context of clusivity: whilst pronoun suppletion in the context of only the inclusive is attested in a variety of languages, such as Evenki (2), Dumi, Sinangoro, Jarawara, amongst others, to our knowledge it is unattested in the context of only the exclusive.

(2)   1sg   bi   (Evenki; Nedjalkov 1997)
        1excl   bu
        1incl   **mit**

We formulate this observation in the following way:

(3)   1excl is never suppletive without 1.incl also being suppletive.

We take this observation to instantiate the absence of an ABA pattern. Note that (3) is a one way correlation: suppletion for both 1incl and for 1excl is attested, as in Paraguayan Guaraní (4), Manam and Boumaa Fijian, amongst others.

(4)   1sg   še   (Paraguayan Guaraní; Gregores & Suárez 1967)
        1excl   **ore**
        1incl   **yane**

That is, among the triple 1sg-1excl-1incl, the attested patterns are AAA, ABB, ABC, AAB, with ABA unattested, bar one example discussed in the paper (based on Norval Smith's Free Personal Pronoun System database; http://languagelink.let.uu.nl/fpps/).

Proposal: (3) raises the question of why is it that the inclusive can supplete on its own, but the exclusive cannot. It has been noted that 1incl is a marked category (Noyer 1992, Siewierska 2004, Cysouw 2005, a.o.). Indeed, the asymmetry between the attested patterns of suppletion in the context of inclusive-only and inclusive-and-exclusive on the one hand, and the unattested pattern of suppletion in the context of the exclusive-only on the other can be accounted for by including markedness considerations in person, the representation of which is as follows (Bobaljik 2008; also Harley & Ritter 2002, Cysouw 2003, McGinnis 2005, Harbour 2011, i.a.):

(5)　　[speaker, hearer,-singular]:1incl　　　　　　[speaker,-singular]: 1excl
　　　　[speaker,+singular]: 1sg　　　　　　　　　　[hearer,+singular]: 2sg

Based on (5), we have a person markedness hierarchy: [speaker] (1sg) is less marked than [speaker, -singular] (1excl) which in turn is less marked than [speaker, hearer, -singular] (1incl). This observation is similar to Calabrese's (2005) insight that (phonological) processes can be sensitive to either only marked features or both unmarked and marked features, but crucially not to only unmarked features (see also Nevins 2010). It appears that suppletion can occur in the context of marked person features (inclusive), of both marked and unmarked person features (inclusive and exclusive), but not in the context of only unmarked person features (exclusive-only). The observation that suppletion can only pick out marked features, or both marked and unmarked features is derived here through containment: there simply is no way for a rule to pick out only an unmarked feature when the marked feature properly contains the marked value. Note that clusivity suppletion thus appears to fit with other noted patterns of suppletion in ruling out ABA patterns. It is not possible to formulate a suppletive rule that will target only 1excl, as this context would also apply to the 1incl pronoun, since the features of 1incl properly contain those of 1excl. However, given that a rule can be formulated to pick out [speaker,hearer,-singular] (1incl), this will then not apply to the 1excl form, [speaker,-singular].

Markedness reversals: Markedness as a governor of suppletion has been invoked recently in Smith et al (2015), in order to explain apparent reversals between dual and plural as to which category can supplete alone across languages. Specifically, whilst it is usually the case that dual is marked relative to plural (so, dual is built on the plural form), for certain languages, such as Hopi, it is reversed, in the sense that plural is the marked value among the two, and the plural is built from the dual (see also Harbour 2014). Markedness reversals of this sort however are not attested in our clusivity survey. We propose here that the reason why markedness reversals are not seen with clusivity is that we are dealing with slightly different types of features. Nevins (2011) argues that the widespread markedness of the dual comes about through the fact that [-augmented] is the general marked value of the feature, though Smith et al (2015) show this to be subject to variation. [±augmented] is thus a binary feature, and either value can be selected as 'marked' in a language. However, based on the data surrounding clusivity, we propose that person features are privative (*contra* Harbour 2016). That is, [hearer] is not [-hearer] or [+hearer], but rather the relation is one of presence vs. absence of the monovalent feature [hearer]. Markedness cannot vary along the same lines as number then, since it would require the literal absence of a feature to be a marked unit. Enough flexibility remains in the system to allow for languages to choose whether [speaker] is marked relative to [hearer], or vice versa, to allow for languages where 1 is more marked than 2, or 2 more marked than 1. Such language internal differences are known from the realm of inverse marking (e.g. in Algonquian languages, Béjar & Rezac 2009). Disallowed universally however, is for 1incl to be less marked than 1excl, a prediction borne out by our data.

Conclusion: In sum, we have argued that clusivity-driven suppletion patterns arise from containment, and the known markedness observations in this area (Cysouw 2003,2005 *i.a.*) are thus an epiphenomenon from this containment. Furthermore, based on markedness reversals observed in number-driven suppletion and the absence of such markedness reversals in clusivity-driven suppletion, we propose that number features are binary, but person features are privative.

Sel. references: Arregi, K. & Nevins, A. 2012. *Morphotactics: Basque auxiliaries and the structure of spellout*. Springer. • Bobaljik, J. 2012. *Universals in Comparative Morphology*. MIT Press. • Harbour, D. 2016. *Impossible Persons*. MIT Press. • Noyer, R. 1992. *Features, positions and affixes*. PhD thesis, MIT.