Evidence from infix allomorphy on the fine timing of the morphosyntax-phonology interface

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Both allomorphy and infixation introduce complexity into morphological systems: allomorphy involves a many-to-one correspondence between form and meaning/function, and infixation disrupts the linear integrity of forms. Both are found across the world’s languages, and have been the subject of much empirical inquiry and theorizing over the years—on infixation, see e.g. Ultan 1975, Moravcsik 1977, 2000, McCarthy and Prince 1993, Halle 2001, Yu 2007, Samuels 2009; on allomorphy, see e.g. Carstairs 1987, Paster 2006, Veselinova 2006, Mascaró 2007, Bobaljik 2012, Stanton 2020.

This talk presents the results of the first cross-linguistic study of allomorphy involving infixation, considering 51 case studies from 42 languages (15 language families). The two phenomena interact in consistent, systematic ways, with distinct sets of behaviors characterizing suppletive and non-suppletive allomorphy involving an infix. Perhaps most notably, suppletive allomorphy is conditioned only at/from the stem edge, while non-suppletive allomorphy is conditioned only in the surface (infixed) environment. The robustness of these and related findings supports an architecture of the morphosyntax-phonology interface where: (i) infixation is indirect, involving displacement from a stem-edge position to a stem-internal one, counter to several well-known theories of infixation (e.g., McCarthy and Prince 1993, Yu 2007); (ii) the choice among suppletive exponents for a morpheme properly precedes infixation of an exponent and cannot be regulated by the phonological grammar (in line with Halle and Marantz 1993, Paster 2006, Rolle 2020, i.a., and in contrast to parallel models like Prince and Smolensky 1993, Mascaró 2007, Wolf 2008, and Bermudez-Otero 2012); and (iii) exponent choice (realization) proceeds from the bottom of the morphosyntactic structure upward (à la Bobaljik 2000, Embick 2010, Myler 2017).