

Pseudo-Pāṇinian splits

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The study of syncretism and the paradigm splits they give rise to occupies a pivotal role in inflectional theory. MORPHOMIC splits (Fig. 1d), as witnessed prominently in Romance (Maiden, 2018) are paradigm splits which, unlike NATURAL splits (Fig. 1a), do not align neatly with morphosyntactic feature distinctions and therefore count among the core evidence for an autonomous morphological component. Furthermore, morphomic splits have also motivated the distinction between content and form paradigms, as made e.g. in PFM (Stump, 2016). NATURAL splits, by contrast, are crucial for understanding patterns of neutralisation (Baerman et al., 2005) and feature indeterminacy (Dalrymple et al., 2009). PĀṆINIAN splits (Fig. 1b; Bonami, 2015) constitute another widely attested pattern, where unnatural classes emerge as a result of a general pattern and overrides for specific cells, as illustrated e.g. by the third singular present indicative in English. Indeed, many formal theories of morphology, including PFM (Stump, 2001), Distributed Morphology (Noyer, 1992) and Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky, 1993), embrace the equivalent of the Elsewhere Condition (Kiparsky, 1985) as an organising principle whereby the special case pre-empts the more general. With Pāṇinian splits, overrides are always properly nested within the default.

A B	A B	A B	A B
α x y	α x x	α x y	α x y
β x y	β x x	β x y	β x x
γ x y	γ x z	γ z z	γ y y
(a) Natural	(b) Pāṇinian	(c) Pseudo-Pāṇinian	(d) Morphomic

Figure 1: Some types of splits

Pseudo-Pāṇinian splits, the pattern we are examining in this talk (Fig. 1c), are illustrated e.g. by Pashto adjectival declension (Fig. 2). Consider first the masculine subparadigm for the class I adjective *tit* ‘scattered’. Except for the oblique plural, the other three cells are syncretic. The very same holds for the feminine subparadigm of class II *təg-ay* ‘thirsty’. These syncretic forms do not constitute natural classes, combining nominative case of any number with the singular of both nominative and oblique case. This is even more clear, if we include the feminine subparadigm of class I and the masculine of class II, where we find a diagonal pattern of syncretism, where identical forms share neither case nor number values.

		MAS	FEM			MAS	FEM
SG	NOM	tit	tit-a	SG	NOM	təg-ay	təg-e
	OBL	tit	tit-e		OBL	təg-i	təg-e
PL	NOM	tit	tit-e	PL	NOM	təg-i	təg-e
	OBL	tit-o	tit-o		OBL	təg-o	təg-o

Figure 2: Declension of *tit* ‘scattered’ (class I) and *təg-ay* ‘thirsty’ (class II) (Tegey & Robson, 1996, 75–76)

At first sight, the syncretism patterns found with Pashto adjectival declension (Fig. 2) look like a candidate for a Pāṇinian split, where oblique plural *-o* behaves like an override for e.g. default zero (class I masculine) or *-e* (class I & II feminine). If we further assume some specific overrides for certain nominative singular cells (e.g. *tit-a* and *təg-ay*), even an account of the diagonal pattern seems within reach.

However, upon closer inspection, we see that the supposed override (oblique plural *-o*) is actually not properly included within the descriptions of the general patterns, but cuts across gender distinctions and even inflection class. This constitutes a problem for Pāṇinian competition as a principle of knowledge use, since the override is too general to effect pre-emption. Put differently: the special case of OBL.PL *-o* is not properly included in either of the general cases.

The aim of this talk is threefold: first, we shall present instances of Pseudo-Pāṇinian splits (Fig. 1) from a number of unrelated languages to illustrate that the phenomenon is actually not uncommon: beside Pashto, we have so far found this kind of split in several Kiranti languages, most notably Limbu (van Driem, 1987), Camling (Ebert, 1997a), and Athpare (Ebert, 1997b), as well as in Koryak (Žukova, 1972) and Turkana (Dimmendaal, 1983). Second we shall discuss the implications of Pseudo-Pāṇinian splits for formal theories of inflection and show how this pattern can be assimilated to a proper Pāṇinian split. Finally, by investigating patterns that lie in between fully morphomic and Pāṇinian splits, we can uncover new factors contributing to the typology of splits (cf. Herce, 2020).

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