

At the core of morphological
autonomy:
inflectional classes as a residue,
ballast, or resource?

Livio Gaeta

Department of Humanities

University of Turin

livio.gaeta@unito.it

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Inflectional classes as a residue

- Inflectional classes (= ICs) can be held to constitute the essence of morphological autonomy as they cannot be reduced to any other language component in terms of phonologically conditioned alternations, syntactically determined distribution, or semantically driven class membership.
- In this sense, they are an irreducible residue and warrant for the autonomous status of morphology (cf. Aronoff 1994: 46, 166 a. o.).
- On the other hand, they clearly profile language-specific patterning while their cross-linguistic relief remains limited as they are not found or only marginally present in several languages.
 - In fact, they mostly characterize only one of Humboldt's linguistic types.

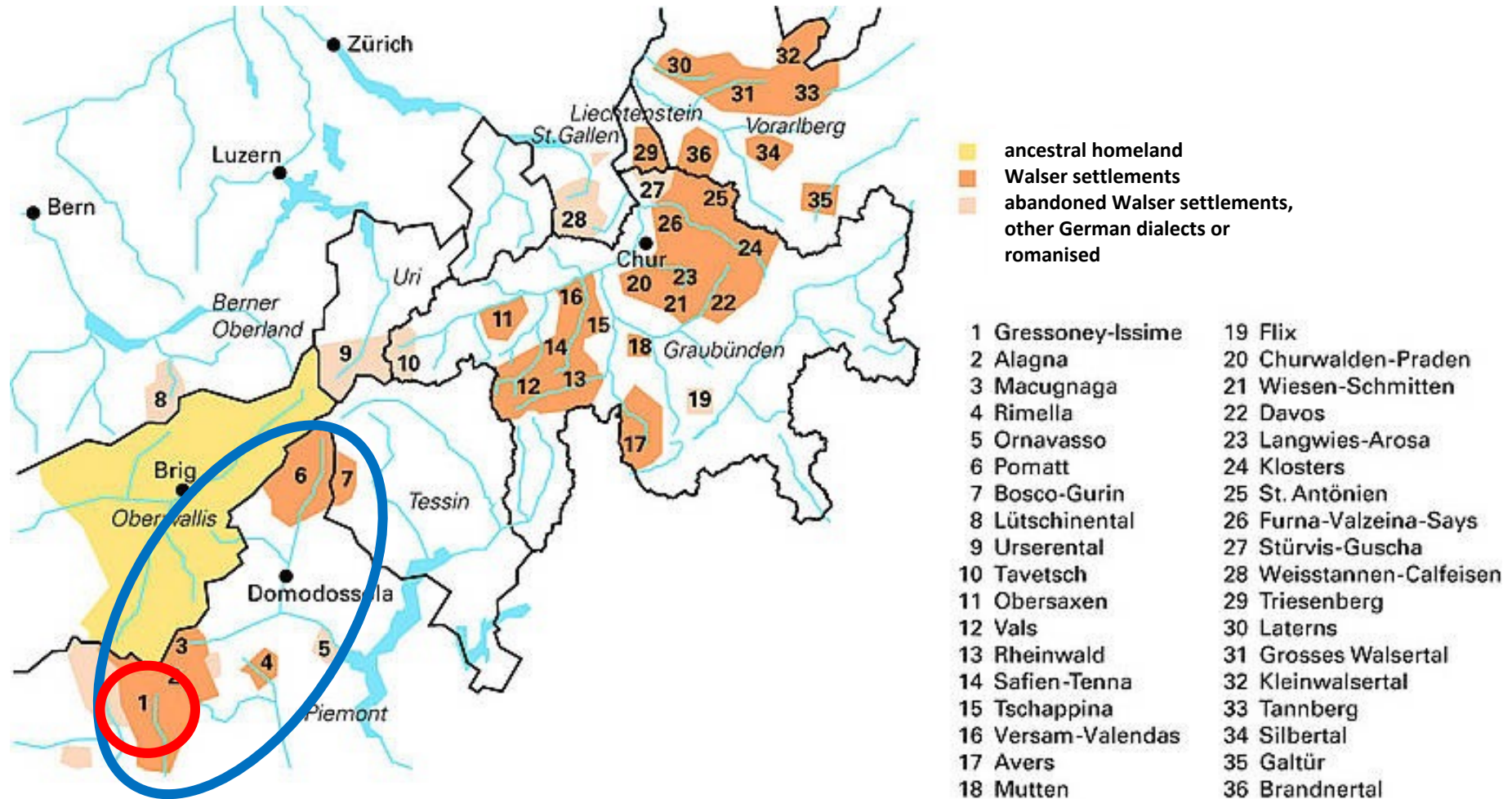
Inflectional classes as a ballast?

- As a ballast (Wurzel 1986, Enger 2014), ICs often undergo reductive language changes.
 - Germanic strong and weak verb classes are systematically reduced throughout the entire family.
 - Etymological strong verbs normally shift to the weak class, possibly giving rise to synchronic variation (overabundance)
 - Middle English *healp* > ModEng *helped*, etc.
 - Middle High German *melken* / *molk* / *gemolken* 'to milk' > ModG *melken* / *molk* ~ *melkte* / *gemelkt* (~ *gemolken*), *weben* / *wob* / *gewoben* 'to weave' > *weben* / *webte* (~ *wob*) / *gewebt*, etc.
 - The opposite change is only sporadically found (Fertig 2020: 207).
- As an extreme case of this general tendency, Afrikaans has completely dispensed with the morphological ballast provided by different ICs and verbs follow the same inflectional pattern with a few exceptions (Donaldson 1993: 222)
 - *breek* 'to break' / *ek het gebreek* 'I broke', *werk* 'to work' / *ek het gewerk* 'I worked'.
- The old contrast survives in a consistent number of participles used as adjectives with the strong form typically reflecting a translated meaning.
 - 'n *gebroke* hart 'a broken heart' vs. 'n *gebreekte* koppie 'a broken cup'

Counteracting reductive changes: The Walser way

- In this connection, an interesting development is found in **Titsch** – a variety of Highest Alemannic spoken in Gressoney, a Walser German island of north-western Italy (cf. Zürrer 2009).
- We will see that in Titsch the strong/weak IC membership depends on the morphosyntactic environment in which a verb occurs.
- In particular, this development profiles a situation in which the basic pillars of Lexicalism such as the Morphology-Free Syntax Principle are shaken.

The Walser German area – Highest Alemannic



- The Alpine Minorities projects in Turin:

- DiWaC (2015-2017)
- ArchiWals (2017-2020)
- CLiMAIp (2020-2023)

- Walser German

- Aosta Valley:
 - Gressoney / Greschoney
 - Issime / Eische
- Piedmont:
 - Formazza / Pomatt
 - Rimella / Remmalju
 - Alagna / Im Lande

- Galloromance

- Occitan (Piedmont)
- Francoprovençal (Aosta Valley and Piedmont)



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www.climalp.org



- The **CLiMAIp Archive** consists of two components:
 - A dictionary which basically results from the digitalization of a number of dictionaries
 - A corpus which is coindexed with the dictionary and is meant to enrich it with a large amount of fresh entries.



PATOIS *VdA*



- 3 ICs for Titsch verbs
(no preterites!)
 - IC-1 (Gmc strong verbs)
 - Inf -e
 - root-vowel alternations
 - PP *-et* or *-en*
 - IC-2 (Gmc weak verbs)
 - Inf -e
 - root-vowel alternations
 - PP *-t*
 - IC-3 (Gmc weak verbs)
 - Inf -ò
 - PP -(ò)*t*

IC	Infinitive	Past Participle	Meaning
IC-1	<i>bisse</i>	<i>béssét</i>	to bite
	<i>fénne</i>	<i>gfònnet</i>	to find
	<i>éllade</i>	<i>éngladen</i> or <i>éngladet</i>	to invite
	<i>schribe</i>	<i>gschrében</i> or <i>gschrébet</i>	to write
	<i>vergässe</i>	<i>vergässen</i> or <i>vergässet</i>	to forget
	<i>verliere</i>	<i>verlòren</i> or <i>verlòret</i>	to lose
IC-2	<i>leite</i>	<i>gleitet</i>	to lead
	<i>läbe</i>	<i>gläbt</i>	to live
	<i>teile</i>	<i>teilt</i>	to divide
	<i>decke</i>	<i>dackt</i>	to cover
	<i>drécke</i>	<i>dròckt</i>	to print
	<i>féerbe</i>	<i>gfoarbt</i>	to color
IC-3	<i>moalò</i>	<i>gmoalòt</i>	to paint
	<i>rächnò</i>	<i>grächnòt</i>	to calculate

- The locus of variation is found in the strong class IC-1:
 - Far from being reducible to a case of overabundance, the variation obeys a clear-cut distribution.
 - While a few verbs of this class select the dental suffix in the PP like the other classes, most verbs belonging to the etymological strong class follow the **IC1 Strong Rule**:
 - Verbs which inflect according to the strong group of IC-1 display the strong suffix in the past participle when the latter occurs in a morphosyntactic environment where it agrees with its head, while they take the weak suffix when the participle appears in constructions where it does not agree, i.e. in combination with the auxiliary HAVE.

	[+ AGR]	[− AGR]
IC-1 – strong	-en	-et
IC-1 – weak	-et	-et
elsewhere	-t	-t
Tab. 4: Syncretism in the Titsch past participles.		

- Most IC-1 verbs obey the Strong Rule, e.g. *bach* ‘to bake’:
 - *ennéra halb stòn ésch z’bròt **bach-en-z** / ***bach-et-z** gsid*
 ‘within one half hour the bread(N.SG) has been baked-N.SG’
 - *de ma wò hannensch noch hientoa schwoarz brot **bach-et** / ***bach-en***
 ‘the men who still have baked the brown bread occasionally’.
- Few IC-1 verbs generalize the weak suffix, e.g. *erfénne* ‘to invent’:
 - *de freezer éscht noch nid **erfònn-et-e** gsid*
 ‘the fridge(M.SG) has not yet been invented-M.SG’
 - *de lehrer hät d’mòsék **erfònn-et** ‘the teacher has invented the music’.*
- This corresponds to IC-2 (*publiziere* ‘to publish’) and IC-3 (*machò* ‘to make’) verbs:
 - *«De zwei eie» éscht schò emoal kanget **publizierz***
 ‘De zwei eie(N.SG) has already been published(N.SG) once’.
 - *dêsche Comitato hät schò andré moal òngefer gliche wéerchene **dirigiert** òn ou **publiziert***
 ‘This committee has already directed and also published once similar works’.
 - *De Walser Kulturzentrum ... hät en usstellòng **gmacht***
 ‘The Walser Kulturzentrum has made an exhibition’.
 - *De gschpélpark éscht nue **gmacht-e** kanget em gliche òrt*
 ‘The playground(F.SG) has now been made-(F.SG) in the same place’.

Syntactic environments for morphological selection

- The Strong Rule holds for any environment in which past participles are inflected including
 - verbal periphrases: BE-, GO- and COME-passive, BE-perfect; small clause
 - adnominal environments: attribution, apposition
- The occurrence of agreement doesn't depend on the type of PP suffix.
- Also etymologically weak verbs like *bégleite* 'to accompany' have adopted the Strong Rule:
 - *òn carabinie heintscha **begleitet*** 'and the carabinieri have accompanied them'
 - *z'lied ... és vòn der gitarò **begleiten-z** gsid* 'the song(N.SG) has been accompanied-(N.SG).'
- Systematic adjective agreement (Fleischer 2007)
 - *d'hannetò moss nid déck-é òn nid dénn-é si*
'The mush has to be neither thick-F.SG nor thin-F.SG'.
 - *der ange chént rék-e*
'the butter becomes (lit. comes) rancid-M.SG'

- BE-perfect:
 - *de Jònker-Ronker **ésch** rächt **antschloafn-e** gsid*
 'the Jònker-Ronker[M] had (lit. is been) immediately fallen-M.SG asleep'
- BE-passive:
 - *Wenn de zécker **ésch gschmòlzn-e***
 'When the sugar[F] has (lit. is) fused-F.SG'.
- COME-passive (only present):
 - *vòn nòn an **chenz** ém Walserzentrum ... **henderzochen-z***
 'from now on it is (lit. comes.it) investigated-N.SG in the Walserzentrum'
- GO-passive (only past):
 - *Dez Hus **escht** ends vom letschte Joahrhondert **abbrochen-s canget***
 'The house[N] has been (lit. is gone) turned-N.SG down at the end of the last century'.
- Small clause:
 - *Fenné où **ufgschrében-z** of enz notizbuech **dass** wier hättéber sollò noasieché*
 'I find also written-N.SG down on our notebook that we should have to investigate'.
- Appositive position:
 - *mé dem eigene **noame** drònder **gschrébn-e***
 'with one's own name[M] written-M.SG thereon'
- Attributive position:
 - *en dé **vergangn-é zitte**.*
 'in the past-F.SG time[F]'

The tough life of a Titsch strong participle

- In Titsch a strong verb must therefore look for several pieces of information coming from different sources in order to provide a past participle.
 - It must have lexical information available, i.e. whether it belongs to the dominant strong group of IC-1 or to the small weak group of IC-1
 - Subsequently, it must have access to “environmental” information, i.e. whether it occurs in a morphosyntactic context requiring agreement or not
 - With this information in its hands, the verb can provide the fitting form of the past participle selecting the strong or the weak form, which accordingly displays further agreement markers:
 - *Das **éscht** vòn der polizei **verbottens**.* ‘This is forbidden by the police’.
 - *D’polizei **hät** das **verbietet**.* ‘The police has forbidden/forbid this’.

Syntax-driven reanalysis as a response to ballast

- Such a syntax-driven reanalysis of the selection of the suffix can be seen as a response to the general tendency towards the reduction of the ICs commonly found in the Germanic languages.
 - This change counteracted the loss of IC distinction which is completely dismissed in Afrikaans as a useless ballast.
 - In Afrikaans this loss has left behind a considerable number of residues of the strong IC in terms of allomorphic variants of the participle when the latter is used as a predicative adjective in contrast to its use in the passive periphrasis (Donaldson 1993: 259):
 - *Dit **is** (*deur die polisie) **verbode**.* ‘This is forbidden (*by the police)’.
 - *Dit **is** deur die polisie **verbied**.* ‘This has been/was forbidden by the police’.
 - *Die polisie **het** dit **verbied**.* ‘The police has forbidden/forbid this’.

Exploiting syntax for preserving morphology

- Instead of the chaotic and totally idiosyncratic picture observed in Afrikaans, the strong IC-1 verbs in Titsch display a clear-cut distribution, where the distinction has acquired a new extra-morphological motivation provided by the morphosyntactic environment in connection with the occurrence of overt agreement (Wurzel 1984, Gaeta 2016, 2020).
- In this sense, the syntax-driven reanalysis has exploited ICs as a resource against chaos.

			PAST
<i>bräche</i> 'to break'	IC-1a	<i>broche-t</i> _[- inflected]	<i>broche-n</i> _[+ inflected]
<i>leite</i> 'to lead'	IC-1b	<i>gleite-t</i> _[± inflected]	
<i>fieri</i> 'to lead'	IC-2	<i>gfier-t</i> _[± inflected]	
<i>moalò</i> 'to paint'	IC-3	<i>gmoalò-t</i> _[± inflected]	

On (im)possible interactions of syntax and morphology

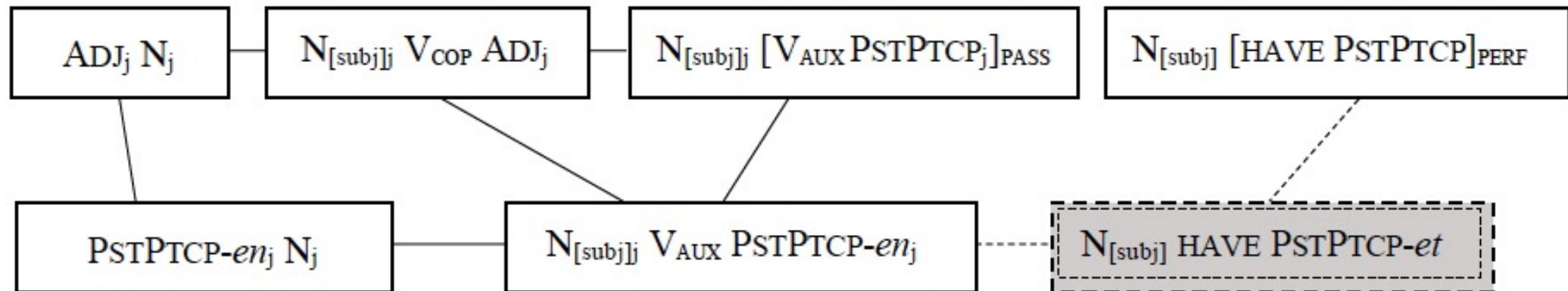
- Main tenet of Lexicalism: strictly morphological information like ICs is generally inaccessible to syntax and to syntactic processes (Morphology-Free Syntax Principle, Zwicky 1992).
 - “Indeed, if we take a canonical syntactic property, such as the position of the verb in a sentence, and compare it with a canonical morphological property, such as membership of a particular conjugation class, if the same principles and rules govern word and phrase structure then **why is it not the case that** we do not find numerous languages in which ... **the conjugation class which a verb takes is determinant on whether the verb appears in a particular position**, perhaps governed by its appearance in a main clause or a subordinate clause? Indeed, **such examples seem not to exist**” (O’Neill 2016: 252, my emphasis).
- Accordingly, syntactic information can only be indirectly relevant for ICs to the extent that an IC rule like the following has to be expressly rejected:
 - “*Verbs which inflect according to inflectional class II take a preceding direct object; others take a following direct object” (Corbett 2012: 61, Corbett & Baerman 2006).

Against Lexicalism?

- Titsch IC-1 verbs provide exactly one such example which is captured in this way:
 - “Verbs which inflect according to IC-1a display a suffix **-n** in the past participle when the latter is used in constructions where it has to be inflected, otherwise it takes **-t**”.
- In the dialectic between dismissing ICs as a useless ballast or exploiting them as an important resource within the lexicon, Titsch has adopted a peculiar solution which sacrificed Lexicalism while it contrasted in this way the chaotic reduction observed in Afrikaans.
- On the other hand, the violation of Lexicalism is limited to the introduction of **indexical coding** in the IC-1, whereby the coding of the past participle directly points to the morphosyntactic environment.
- At any rate, this does not go so far as to question “the assumption that there exist two separate components of grammar, one which governs the structure of words and the other the structure of phrases. And these components are subject to rules which function differently” (O’Neill 2016: 264).

Constructionalization...

- One might attempt a representation in terms of a network, in which the development of the weak participle of IC-1a reflects the constructionalization as creation of a new node in the network (Smirnova & Sommerer 2020):



Conclusion on contact

- Titsch is characterized – like Afrikaans – by massive language contact and is even exposed to significant processes of language decay. Does this play a role in this development?
- Brazilian Pomeranian (Low Saxon, Postma 2018)
 - When a past participle is used verbally, it lacks the **ge-** prefix and the **-en** suffix (a suffix **-a** is used instead); they are only present when it is used adjectivally:
 - *dai gekookt banan* 'the fried banana', *air afgesoogen kalw* 'a weaned calf'.
 - *kooka* 'to cook' / *kookt* 'cooked', *afsuuga* 'wean' / *afsooga* 'weaned'
 - In predicative and adjunct position, the participle ending is **-end**:
 - *dai boum wäir ümgefalend fuuna* 'the tree was found fallen down'.
 - In predicative position, some adjectives display (remnants of) agreement:
 - *Dat is gaud* / **gaur taum hүүser buugen* 'it is good for building houses (with)'.
this is good[N.SG] for.to houses build.INF2

Merci beaucoup!
Many thanks!
Tank vél mòal!



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