An investigation of *ABA patterns of syncretism in the pronominal domain

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1. Introduction. This presentation will investigate *ABA syncretism patterns in pronominal forms, drawing its conclusions from a database of 80 languages. I present morphological evidence that anaphors, diaphors and pronouns are semantically related to each other in a theoretically significant way, such that they share an underlying structure complete with syntactically operative features. For present purposes, an **anaphor** is a variable that takes a local c-commanding antecedent; a **diaphor** is a variable that takes a non-local antecedent, in whose scope it sits; and a **pronoun** is free to take any antecedent it likes.

2. Patterns of syncretism. Consider the sentence in (1), and its possible Logical Functions.

AG 4

(1) Only Piglet thinks that Tigger loves α. x.
a. Only Piglet λx (x thinks that Tigger λy (y loves y)) ANAPHOR
b. Only Piglet λx (x thinks that Tigger λy (y loves x)) DIAPHOR
c. Only Piglet λx (x thinks that Tigger λy (y loves z)) PRONOUN

In English, the first LF corresponds to the PF pronunciation in which the anaphor himself replaces α in (1), while the latter two LFs are derived when α is replaced by *him*. I assume that the syncretism of two items indicates that they share an underlying feature, and therefore place anaphors at the top of the list of pronominals. English thus represents an AAB syncretism pattern (read from the bottom up). I presently have data from 80 languages (representing 14 language families) which support two further syncretism patterns: AAA (e.g. Georgian, Tongan), and ABC (e.g. Basque, Yoruba). Given three LFs, 5 syncretism patterns are logically possible. The four attested share one significant property: the syncretisms are all adjacent.

3. Transparent morphology. I analyse this data in the Distributed Morphology and Minimalist frameworks. The syncretism patterns demonstrate that one feature underlies all pronominals (accounting for AAA). Anaphors and diaphors also form a natural class, as do diaphors and pronouns. There are four permutations of features that could capture these divisions and which exclude the ABA pattern. Only one additionally explains the transparent morphology of the 87 sampled languages.

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