

On Portmanteau Agreement

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Portmanteau affixes are markers which in an intuitive sense "replace" two or more simple affixes. While many approaches to inflectional morphology assume the existence of portmanteau affixes without explicit justification (e.g. Lakämper & Wunderlich, 1998), Stump (2001) uses data from Swahili affix blocking to argue that they are empirically necessary. In this talk I focus on multi-argument agreement and defend a view which is implicit in the foundational work on Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz, 1993, 1994): Portmanteau affixes don't exist and apparent portmanteaus result from single overt markers accompanied by zero exponence. I show that even under restrictive theoretical assumptions there are no agreement affixes which must be treated as portmanteaus and many alleged portmanteau affixes which have to be analyzed as simple affixes to capture important patterns in their distribution. Finally, I address the recent claim by Nevins (2007) that portmanteaus are connected typologically to specific markedness configurations, and argue that these observations follow from the specific status of non-third person categories for secondary exponence.