Andrea D. Sims. *Inflectional defectiveness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [*Cambridge Studies in Linguistics.*] 2015. pp. xxi, 309.

Reviewed by Frank Y. Gladney*

The Russian verb *pobedit'* 'conquer' shows what Sims calls canonical defectiveness, "the complete lack of any word-form filling a given paradigm cell [...] in the context of a maximal expectation that there should be some form corresponding to that cell" (250). That cell is the first-person singular nonpast, in which **pobežu* is bad and so are **pobedju* and **pobeždu.* In this wide-ranging study she cites data from two dozen languages and employs a variety of tools like statistical analysis and information theory in order to provide a context for understanding the defectiveness of *pobedit'.*

Introductory chapter 1 poses the question: Are paradigm gaps random anomalies, epiphenomena, or normal morphological objects? They are anomalies when they are generated by the regular rules of inflection but then must be specified [–lexical insertion] to prevent their occurring in a sentence. They are epiphenomenal when they reflect morphological rule competition, such as the competition between the Russian reflex of /dj/ (in **pobežu*) and the Church Slavic reflex (in **poeždu*). The epiphenomena explanation could have been pursued further. The same competition between Russian *ž* and Church Slavic *žd* is seen in the nonoccurring imperfective **pobeživat'* and the standard imperfective *pobeždat'*, which shows that the Church Slavic reflex, although acceptable in derivation, is not acceptable in inflection (or no longer acceptable: Pushkin had *straždut* as the 3pl. of *stradat'* 'suffer', but it has been replaced by *stradajut*). Sims rejects these two options and throughout the book repeatedly argues that such gaps are "normal morphological objects" (209) and that inflectional defectiveness is "a systemic variant of normal inflectional structure" (11).

In chapter 2 Sims defines inflectional defectiveness and evaluates candidates for it. In the Yimas sentence *taŋatpul* 'You didn't hit me', the absence of *ma* 'you' is not a gap because the sentence is well formed and interpreted as having a second-person singular subject. ("This is thus an example of zero expression of the nominative, which is not to be confused with lack of expression" [32]) "Inasmuch as [*taŋatpul*] is a well-formed sentence and the ineffability requirement of the definition is thus not met, this does" [surely the author

meant to write "does *not*"] "qualify as an example of inflectional defectiveness according to the criteria employed here" (32). The same goes for *On – vrač* 'He is a doctor', which is fully effable, so the zero copula of *byt'* does not constitute a paradigm gap.

Sims says *Ja kupila čto bylo v magazine* 'I bought what was in the store' is grammatical because *čto* "exhibits nominative-accusative syncretism [and] is thus able to simultaneously fulfill the requirement of the matrix verb for an accusative subject, and of the subordinate clause verb for a nominative subject" (29–30). Compare the ungrammaticality of *Ja ne mogla ponravit'sja *komu/*kogo on nenavidit* 'I could not please the one whom he hates', which she ascribes to the lack of dative-accusative syncretism. But all the first sentence shows is that a relative clause's pronominal antecedent is sometimes omitted, as it is in *Mne nužno čem pisat'* 'I need something to write with', which cannot be considered a case of accusative-instrumental syncretism. The pronominal antecedent that makes Sims's sentence grammatical—*Ja ne mogla ponravit'sja tomu*, *kogo on nenavidit*—is the dative of *tot*, the antecedent of the relative clause, not the dummy *to,* which precedes a complement clause, for example, in *Ja uznala i to, kogo on nenavidit* 'I also found out who(m) he hates'.

Sims asks "whether there is an empirically grounded distinction between periphrasis and defectiveness" (38), which I take to mean, Can defectiveness in a paradigm be repaired by periphrasis? At issue is the perfect passive in Latin, where corresponding to the present passive *laudor* 'I am praised' we have the periphrastic perfect passive *laudātus sum.* Sims deliberates whether *laudātus sum* pertains to morphology or to syntax. It is syntactic in consisting of two distinct, wordlike units, morphological in that "it encodes independently motivated morphological features and stands in paradigmatic contrast with synthetic forms" (39). "Also," she continues, "tense and mood cannot be doled out to either of the two parts of the construction; these values are necessarily interpreted as being carried by the construction in its entirely." As to how *laudātus sum* is formally related to *laudāre,* one possibility Sims mentions is Distributed Morphology, where "constituent structure is manipulated post-syntactically but before vocabulary insertion so that a given set of morpho-syntactic values surfaces sometimes synthetically and sometimes periphrasti-cally" (41). Sims mentions several other approaches but does not commit to one. She concludes that the paradigm of *laudāre* is not defective.

In chapter 3 Sims discusses the causes of inflectional defectiveness. They can stem from semantics/pragmatics, as the lack of a vocative form of nouns denoting inanimates; from phonology, as the impossibility of the genitive *-s* with Swedish nouns ending in a sibilant; from morphology, as when the singular forms of *abolir* 'abolish' are defective ("a way to avoid a stylistic incon-gruity between the native Spanish patterns of alternation and the learned, borrowed nature of the defective lexemes" (67); the same incongruity as in **pobežu*?)—or from morphosyntactic structure, as with the defective *beware*

with no 3rd sg. form (no *John bewares of the dog*). She ends the chapter downplaying causative factors and proposing a complex-system approach to inflectional defectiveness.

The main topic of chapter 4 is the interaction of defectiveness and syncretism. Being mainly interested in Russian, my eye was caught by what Sims presents as a case of defectiveness overriding syncretism. The accusative plural of animate nouns in Russian is known to be syncretic with the genitive plural (*Oni ljubjat/bojatsja svoix žën* 'They love/fear their wives'). But the genitive plural of end-stressed feminine nouns is sometimes problematic, as Sims illustrates with Zoščenko's short story "The Poker". (Needing to say 'five pokers', the characters in the story have a problem with gen. pl. *kočerëg*.) For the dozen animate end-stressed feminine nouns Sims lists (85), such as *kumá* 'godmother' and *kargá* 'crow, hag', the *Orfoèpičeskij slovar' russkogo jazyka* says that the genitive plural is "not used" or is "difficult," which should apply also to the accusative plural. And yet, on the authority of Andrej Zaliznjak, Sims says *kargá* is defective in the genitive plural but not in the accusative plural. Her "own, informal survey of Russian speakers also suggests that the genitive plural is perceived as more problematic than the syncretic accusative plural form" (85). If so, this would indeed be a case of the defectiveness of gen. pl. **karg* overriding accusative-genitive syncretism. However, I find it hard to believe there are Russian speakers who accept *Oni ljubjat svoix kum* 'They love their godmothers' with the accusative but reject *Oni bojatsja svoix kum* 'They fear their godmothers' with the genitive. In the case of *kargá,* I wonder if the partly homophonous inanimate *kárga* 'forest swamp', which has the expected acc. pl. *kárgi* and gen. pl. *karg,* might not have confused the issue.[1] Also discussed in the chapter are other interactions of defectiveness and syncretism.

Chapters 5 and 6 are mainly concerned with nouns in Modern Greek. But first Sims—an adherent of word-and-paradigm morphology—makes a case against morpheme morphology, as follows. She draws up a table of three lexemes, A, B, and C, which with three morphosyntactic values select nine endings (136). To make this less abstract, let A, B, and C be the *o*-declension noun /stol/, the *a*-declension noun /žen/, and the *i*-declension noun /kost/, respectively, and let the morphosyntactic values be nominative singular, genitive singular, and instrumental singular, so that the *o*-declension endings are /Ø/, /a/, and /om/, the *a*-declension endings are /a/, /y/, and /oj/, and the *i*-declension endings are /Ø/, /i/, and /ju/. Sims comments: "This principle

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[1] Some additional points regarding Russian. The stylistic label *zatrud.* 'difficult' expands to *zatrudnitel'no*, not **zatrudneetsja* (2, fn. 3). *Zatmit'* 'darken' does not have a 1sg. gap (4): *zatmlju* is attested. *Čaša čaju*, if ever uttered, would mean 'a chalice of tea', not 'a cup of tea' (90). *Verit'sja* means 'be believed', not '(cause to) believe' (214). Sims correctly notes that the expected 1sg. of *čtit'* 'honor' would be **čč u* and comments "we still have to wonder why no repair strategy applies to čтит'" (217). There is a repair strategy: a readjustment rule deletes the theme vowel in /čt–i–u/ to yield *čtu*.

for matching stems to exponents seems initially to be efficient and it maxi-
mizes economy of storage. However, it has a significant consequence: there is
nothing inherent in the principle of stem and affix indexation that captures
the generalization that if [/kost/] has suffix [/Ø/] for [nominative singular], it
will also have [/i/ and /ju/] for [genitive singular and instrumental singular],
and vice versa. The fact that inflectional exponents exhibit dependencies (oc-
curring in sets that form inflection classes) is reduced to the coincidence of
having the same index value" (136). But what is fact (phenomenon) and what
is coincidence (epiphenomenon) is a matter of viewpoint. From a morpheme
viewpoint it is fact that an *i*-declension noun in an instrumental singular sen-
tence environment selects the ending /ju/. That it independently selects other
endings in other sentence environments could be considered epiphenomenal.
Arranging endings in sets that form inflection classes might be useful peda-
gogically, but in the generation of sentences what matches affixes with stems
is indexation. Sims voices the fear that "[i]f inflectional exponents were to
combine with stems in a way that was truly independent of other inflectional
exponents, the mathematical upper limit on the number of inflection classes
would be the product of the number of members in each set of exponents"
(possibly thousands in a system with a large number of exponents). This does
not happen, because while instr. sg. /ju/, for example, is independent of gen.
sg. /i/, they are both indexed as *i*-declension.

The rest of the chapter Sims devotes to the inflection of the Modern Greek
noun in an effort to understand the implicative relations of the paradigm. Its
implicative structure is a matter of conditional entropy, which is "a measure
of the average amount of uncertainty associated with one element of a system
based on knowing another element" (141). That of course depends on what
that other element is. If, for example in Russian, the known elements are loc.
sg. *stole* and *stene,* there is some uncertainty as to nom. sg. *stol* and *stena* but
less uncertainty if the known elements are instr. sg. *stolom* and *stenoj.* Sims
focuses on the genitive plural form in Modern Greek. Unless it is defective, it
invariably ends in *-on,* which means it gives no information about the other
forms in the paradigm. The question is whether the distribution of genitive
plural defectiveness can be explained by the implicative structure of nominal
inflection classes. Stress placement has much to do with it, as genitive-plural
gaps occur only in nouns that do not stress the final syllable. These ideas are
developed in the final two dozen pages of the chapter with the help of three
formulas and nine graphs. It is not easy reading.[2]

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[2] A sample sentence: "[Ackerman and Malouf] operationalize inflectional complex-
ity by averaging across individual pairs of paradigm cells[,] and their hypothesis
thus does not depend in any fundamental way on the notion of inflection classes as
bounded, differentiable entities" (142–43).

In chapter 6 Sims continues the discussion of Modern Greek nouns and discusses the factors contributing to paradigm gaps, such as a lack of paradigm cohesion and the availability of a prepositional phrase as an alternative to the problematic genitive plural form. She traces the tendency of genitive gaps to be reanalyzed as properties of individual lexemes. This, she says, "is further evidence of a fundamental similarity between defectiveness and other kinds of morphological expression" (180). This accords with the book's main thesis, that instances of inflectional defectiveness are normal morphological objects.

In chapter 7 Sims ponders how Russian speakers, given only negative evidence and sparse data, manage to learn first-person singular paradigm gaps and retain them from one generation to the next. This is all the harder to understand "if the gaps are lexicalized and removed from their historical causes" (224). Over the next 24 pages Sims presents a conceptual model of how this works, using 12 algebraic formulas and 15 graphs. This too is not easy reading.

In chapter 8 Sims gives her claim that paradigm gaps are normal morphological objects its most concrete formulation. She proposes that "irreducible paradigm gaps are essentially allomorphs of abstract morphemes (i.e., sets of morphosyntactic values)" (253). But the value sets {1sg, nonpast} and {3sg, nonpast} are exclusively syntactic; they are morphosyntactic only when realized in *pobežu and pobedit. Further, sets of syntactic features lacking phonetic substance are not morphemes and hence cannot be allomorphs. There is, Sims observes, "a tendency not to think of paradigmatic gaps as a kind of inflectional allomorph that exists in complementary distribution to and in competition with other allomorphs," an analysis, she says, based on "the empirical distributional facts themselves." Those who have this tendency make the "a priori assumption ['not well-founded'] that defectiveness is something wholly different from well-formedness" (257). Having worked through this demanding book, focusing on Russian and thus possibly not doing justice to the breadth and depth of Sims's investigation, I still find the nonoccurrence of *pobežu wholly different from the well-formedness of pobediš', pobedit, pobedim, pobedite, pobedjat.

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