Systemic Organization in Word-Based Morphology
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An obvious fact about morphology has been explored in many different ways: speakers correctly produce fully inflected and derived forms of words that they have not previously encountered. This ability becomes more perplexing the more complex a language’s morphology is, both in terms of the number of potential wordforms and the strategies used to shape and distinguish them from one another. And the task is rendered even more mysterious by the known Zipfian distributions of data among words. What is the basis of speakers’ reliable, predictive knowledge in this domain? How are speakers’ grammatical expectations channeled and shaped by the stimuli they encounter? Recent Word and Pattern (WP) models of morphology, relying on earlier insights about the implicative organization of morphological systems, have argued that systemic morphological organization constrains an otherwise unrestricted set of combinatorial options and guides the guesses of speakers. In this talk I will provide a word-based perspective on morphological organization. This entails a presentation of the explanatory nature of words as relational units of patterned organization. I will illustrate the value of this type of approach by focusing on the interleaving of inflection and derivation within periphrastic morphological constructions typified by Hungarian phrasal predicates.