From variation to the emergence of linguistic regularities
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Introduction:
- In languages, two rules may be in competition. Regularization occurs when one of them emerge as an optimal solution and completely overtakes the other one.
- Regularization is often seen as a change in individuals’ grammar.
- Evidences from cultural evolution (Derex, 2015, 2016) or complex systems (Becker & al., 2009) studies suggests that changes at a macro level doesn’t necessarily reflect changes at a micro level.
- In linguistic terms, this suggests that regularization at a community-level does not reflect a change in individuals’ grammar.
- In this study, I explore how community-level factors may explain the regularization of certain derivational processes (Compound Abbreviated Loanwords) in Japanese.

What is a Compound Abbreviated Loanword (CAL)?
CALs are abbreviations:
- Based on two constituents of foreign origin
- Frequent and employed in various situations (not only in informal speech)
- Phonologically constrained derivation process: Conservation of the 2 initial morae of each constituent to form a four morae abbreviation (see pokémon below).
- Sometimes irregular: Majority of exceptions include three morae, maintaining only the first mora of the second constituent (see potet̂i in Japanese).
- Individuals show different patterns of irregularity, reflecting competition between rules.

Examples:
English: pocket monster
Japanese: po.ke.tő mo.N su.ta. a
Abbrev.: po.te ti.̂i pu.su
Katakana: ポケモン

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New experimental approach:
Questions arising from previous results:
- How can regularity emerge at community-level when individuals have different preferences?
- What community-level factors play a role in the regularization process?

Multi-player online game (see Fig.2):
- Players create new CALs together.
- Players assign names to imaginary creatures.
- Players are motivated to anticipate group-level outcomes.
  - E.g., they get more points if everyone in a group chooses the same name.
- Focus on how players converge on naming solutions when variation in the grammar presents multiple options (e.g., when /R/ or /Q/ should appear at the end of a CAL).

Community-level parameters:
- The size of groups of players (Derex & al., 2013)
- Connections within and between groups (i.e., network structure, Derex & Boyd, 2016)
- Mode of interaction (e.g., negotiation via chatbox).
- Social factors (e.g., variant prestige, Tamariz et al., 2011)
- Distribution of biases in the community (Pierrehumbert et al., 2014)
- …

Main objectives:
- Explain discrepancy between individual-level and community-level preferences.
- Identify the role of different community-level factors in the process of regularization.

Next steps:
- Complete the creation of the game (select items, design the creatures, run tests, …).
- Create multiple versions with different parameter manipulations.
- Collect the data.
- Analyze the data: What factors significantly influenced the players’ attitudes and scores? In what way?
- Conduct agent-based modeling simulations (Netlogo) and compare to empirical results. (Wilensky, 1999)

References:

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